

**Leading Restorative Change: A Case Study of Implementing and Sustaining
Restorative Culture in an Ontario Middle School**

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Abstract

In February of 2008, the Government of Ontario released legislation for *Progressive Discipline* in Ontario schools. As a means of fulfilling this legislation, some school districts in Ontario implemented the use of restorative practices. Restorative practices are viewed as a positive means for transforming the culture of a school, yet literature suggests some concerns with restorative approaches. While the practice has been used intermittently across the province of Ontario, seen in some districts or in individual schools, there has not been widespread implementation. Literature suggests that the theoretical foundations of restorative practices are not strong. To enrich literature on restorative culture change, there needs to be ongoing assessment of restorative paradigm shifts in schools. The research addresses the need for studying the leading of restorative culture change from a relational perspective. This research undertook a qualitative case study methodology of a middle school in southern Ontario, examining the school's journey to implement and sustain a restorative culture. The study looked at the role of leadership in pursuing a restorative vision, the response to the vision by the school community, and how restorative practices are employed by the school. The research revealed the value of restorative practices in establishing space, processes, attitudes, and key questions for initiating dialogue, each critical to establishing a strong relational culture. The need for leadership to continually model restorative practices in order that they are established throughout the organization is necessary for sustaining a restorative culture. Finally, the study showed that evaluating the effectiveness of restorative practices using a relational and dialogic paradigm is critical for founding and sustaining a restorative vision, thereby establishing a strong foundation for effective student learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In February of 2008, the Government of Ontario released legislation for *Progressive Discipline* in Ontario schools. Progressive discipline promotes a whole-school approach using a variety of strategies to address student transgressions and to promote positive behaviour (Roher, 2008). As a means of fulfilling this legislation, some school districts in Ontario implemented *restorative justice* programs. Philosophically from a restorative justice perspective, when harm or misbehaviour occurs it is viewed as a violation of people rather than a violation of laws (Llewellyn, 2012; Reimer, 2011). Restorative justice, also referred to as *restorative practices*, *restorative approaches*, or simply as being *restorative*, stresses the importance of relationships in an educational community seeking to uphold the best interests of every individual in the school (Vaandering, 2013, 2014a). Zehr (2005) notes that restorative justice and restorative approaches represent “a validation of values and practices that were characteristic of many indigenous groups” (pp. 268-9). He cites the Maori of New Zealand and the First Nations of North America as two groups who have made valuable contributions to modern restorative practices. Ross (1996), a crown attorney involved in restorative approaches to justice in Canada, states that an indigenous view of relationships shifts the relational perspective from “I *have* relationships” to “I *am* relationships” (p. 68).

Restorative justice is often considered a branch of restorative practices; restorative practices involve both proactively building relationships and community and reactive responses to misbehaviour, whereas restorative justice is often viewed solely as reactive responses to conflict and misbehaviour (Wachtel, 2012). Restorative practices, in acknowledging the importance of building and maintaining relationships, recognize that

schools play an essential role in not only educating students about the importance of relationships but also modeling and fostering positive relationships amongst members of the school community (Hendry, 2009).

Hendry (2009) articulates that school communities that have undertaken a restorative philosophy are shown to be safer and happier. He also indicates that schools that employ restorative practices see long-term benefits in terms of both student learning and student development. Reimer (2015) notes that the success of restorative practices in schools is often reduced to quantitative measures of reduced exclusions in the form of suspensions, expulsions, or visits to administrators' offices. Llewellyn, Archibald, Clairmont, and Crocker (2013) state that research shows restorative justice to be successful in regard to several measures including: reduced recidivism, high levels of satisfaction among those who participate in restorative justice processes, and upholding restorative processes as fair, both in terms of procedures and in terms of outcomes. These measures uphold restorative justice as legitimate for some individuals and organizations.

Traditionally, many schools and school boards have employed retributive and punitive techniques for discipline and for classroom management in order to change student behaviour (Reimer, 2011; Zehr, 2005). In this same vein, the range of responses to misbehaviour has been limited to what Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) name as the *punitive-permissive continuum*, whereby if responses are not punitive, they must be permissive. Controlling behaviour promotes student compliance and upholds the classroom teacher as a manager, whereas a restorative relational discourse promotes student empowerment and upholds educators as leaders, supporters, and encouragers (Vaandering, 2014a). By promoting a shift toward schools that seek change through

investing in relationships rather than through controlling student behaviour, restorative practices serve as a foundation for positive school culture change (Blood, 2005).

Schein (2004) describes culture as:

a pattern of shared assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 17)

A restorative culture can be defined as a culture that supports and upholds school imperatives whereby learning, best practices, leadership, behaviour management, school policy, and general dialogue are grounded in a values-driven, dialogically based, relational foundation, supporting both individual and interpersonal needs of the school community (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Llewellyn et al., 2013).

Schein (2004) posits that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin and that the real job of a leader is to create and manage culture. To change culture in a school is to change the assumptions of the members of the school community.

McCluskey (2014a) describes leading members of the school community toward a restorative culture as a “disruptive and unsettling” (p. 136) experience, for one needs to challenge how things are done. Changing familiar paradigms and challenging organizational values is difficult, for values, assumptions, and paradigms are deeply rooted in previous assumptions, processes, values, and cultures (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). Elmore (2004) describes the task of increasing the performance of organizational members as “complex and difficult work” (p. 217), for the task of change goes far beyond simply changing policy. He adds that to create conditions for success,

school leadership needs to address conditions that inhibit student learning if change is desired that increases learning. Implementing a relational restorative culture in a retributive tradition is a complex endeavor, requiring school leadership to fully invest in the change (Blood, 2005; Pavelka, 2013; Reimer, 2011; Shaw, 2007; Simpson, 2004).

In order to effectively implement any change and ultimately change a culture, school leadership needs to be able to articulate and lead a vision to all members of the school community, a task that is generally countercultural (Elmore, 2004). Fullan (2006) states that having a theory that a school works under is not sufficient; the leadership, and then others in the organization must be explicit in putting theory into action in order to experience genuine organizational culture change. Bridges and Bridges (2009) deem that it is not the *change* itself that is difficult, but the *transition*, for change is situational but transition is psychological, as those in an organization internalize and come to terms with new realities. New perspectives require that one cast away previous assumptions and norms.

Those who face change take on one of two attitudes: growing into the new perspectives brought about by change or disregarding the problem that brought about change and clinging to one's present worldview (Laloux & Wilber, 2014). Wenger (1998) speaks to integrating the concepts of community and action, referring to a *community of practice*, whereby the community is involved in the change endeavour. He states that a community of practice fulfils a vision through three dimensions: *mutual engagement*, a *joint enterprise*, and a *shared repertoire*. He describes how the community must negotiate meaning. While negotiated meaning can give rise to new practice, the negotiation can also prevent change if the engagement and shared repertoire do not

uphold the desired cultural vision. Generally, culture change in a school starts with school administration leading teachers in the organizational vision, for teachers are in the forefront of working with students every day. Yet, the vision is only viable if executed at the classroom level.

It has been almost nine years since Ontario released progressive discipline legislation. Consequently, leadership in schools employing restorative practices as a means of upholding progressive discipline have had an 8- to 9-year window to implement restorative approaches and to work toward developing a restorative culture. Shaw (2007) states that the length of time required to embed new approaches is a major challenge to the implementation of restorative culture. To fully realize a restorative school can take 3 to 5 years (Blood, 2005). Schein (2004) notes that change cannot be broadly defined as *culture change*, but rather requires specific change goals defined in terms of new behaviours. Undertaking change of any type—specifically the change to a restorative culture in this instance—is a long-term investment that requires both formal and informal leadership to lead the greater school community to invest in the culture change process through pursuing change goals.

Problem Statement

While restorative practices are viewed as a positive means for transforming the culture of a school, literature suggests some concerns with restorative approaches. Vaandering (2011) highlights that restorative practices are grounded in ancient indigenous traditions. Yet, Barrett (2013) indicates that the practice of modern restorative practices has preceded the development of the theoretical foundations of restorative practices: these theoretical underpinnings need to continue to be strengthened (Llewellyn

et al., 2013). While the practice has been used intermittently across the province of Ontario (Reimer, 2011), seen in some districts or in individual schools, Bickmore (2011) suggests we need to examine why there is not widespread implementation. Reimer suggests that school administrators, board members, teachers, and support staff need to learn from the experiences of other schools in understanding how leadership implements and sustains a restorative culture, but there is little research regarding the process from which to draw resources, stories, and wisdom specifically in a Canadian context (see Reimer, 2011; Vaandering, 2009). Costello et al. (2009) add that the qualitative reports of improvement in restorative schools that do exist are primarily anecdotal.

Purpose of the Study

To enrich literature on restorative culture change, there needs to be ongoing assessment of restorative paradigm shifts in schools (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The purpose of my research is to study how school leadership engages in leading the school community through the change process of developing a restorative school culture. Furthermore, the study examines how members of the school community: administrators, teachers, students, and support staff, experience the culture change process and how they employ and/or experience restorative approaches and practices on a day-to-day basis.

Research Questions

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) state that “one of the critical issues for successful implementation and sustainability of a restorative philosophy is the realisation that this means organisational and cultural change” (pp. 2–3). They add that successful implementation of a restorative culture is reliant on leadership throughout the school that is dedicated to realizing restorative change. They believe this occurs in a context of

proactively building healthy relationships amongst all members of the school community to change culture and ultimately increase student learning. This research seeks to answer the following questions, based on Blood and Thorsborne's vision for restorative culture change:

1. What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture?
2. How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community?
3. What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community?

Rationale

While studies have been done examining the role of leadership in implementing restorative justice (Reimer, 2011) and the implementation of restorative justice (Vaandering, 2009), the topic of the role of leadership in implementing a restorative culture—specifically proactive restorative practices—is underdeveloped. Creswell (2003) upholds that qualitative research can be undertaken when research is underdeveloped or when theory is lacking regarding a specific problem. This research will contribute to academic literature in three ways: The research will add to literature on how leadership engages in leading a school community toward developing a restorative culture, specifically in a Canadian context. Second, the research will create a research-based picture to provide a clearer understanding of what the development of a restorative culture looks like in a school. Finally, the research employs relational conceptions of leadership and how organizations can be structured and led through constructionist

relational ontologies, an area of research that is underdeveloped in the study of leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

From Restorative Justice to Restorative Practices: A Relational Shift in Leadership

Llewellyn et al. (2013) note that the successes of restorative justice have been evaluated in terms of traditional responses to conflict such as reduced crime rates, recidivism rates, and compliance rates. They claim, “restorative justice is best viewed as a relational theory of justice” (p. 295). Therefore, they challenge that to evaluate restorative cultures, “measures of success could highlight collaborative processes, improvement in skills, understanding, social relations, and the creation of a stronger, positive sense of community” (p. 308). Shaw (2007) states the need to continue to investigate how relational restorative practices contribute to schools where students are happy and safe. He also contends that more research is needed in terms of how restorative practices develop schools that uphold social justice. Vaandering (2014b) upholds the need for a relational framework for restorative approaches in order to challenge “the temptation to be objective about restorative justice, as if it were just another approach in education” (p. 509).

School communities need a relational vision; a vision for how the culture of schools can be changed through a foundation of positive relationality. Ricoeur (as cited in Uhl-Bien, 2006) stresses that people need to learn to live well with others, upholding what Ricoeur refers to as the *ethics of reciprocity*. In the context of looking outward to others, leadership shifts to be *relational leadership*, whereby decision-making is made in the context of relations. Morrison et al. (2005) articulate that relational and collaborative philosophy should be revealed throughout the organization, reflected in policy,

curriculum development, and day-to-day interactions. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), “suggest that relational leadership means recognizing the intersubjective nature of life, the inherently polyphonic and heteroglossic nature of relationships, and the need to engage in *relational dialogue*” (p. 1437). In relational dialogue, participants in the dialogue recognize the value and worth of other individuals in the dialogue. Johannesen (2000) expresses three attitudinal dimensions of genuine dialogue: *authenticity*, *inclusion*, and *confirmation*. Authenticity is an attitude of being honest and straightforward. Inclusion is the attitude that everyone’s viewpoint needs to be honoured. Confirmation is the need to possess genuine concern for the others in the dialogue, even if one disagrees with their position. Relational leaders are in relation with others, and therefore morally accountable to others, engaging through relational dialogue (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

Dialogue must be understood as an exploratory process that unfolds thoughts and ideas into a fuller understanding for all involved (Bohm, Factor, & Garrett, 1991).

Kazepides (2010) observes dialogue to be most effective when it engages, motivates, and cultivates creativity and critical thinking. Bohm et al. describe the essence of dialogue as “one of free play, a sort of collective dance of the mind that, nevertheless, has immense power and reveals coherent purpose. Once begun it becomes continuing adventure that can open the way to significant and creative change” (p. 10). In the interaction of those dialoguing, in the sphere of space that is outside of each dialoguer, meaning is found (Friedman, 1960). Buber (1923/1970) believes that the attitude with which people uphold others in a dialogue is of the utmost importance. Everyone in the dialogue needs to know that they are included in the conversation. *Inclusion* is not simply a key feature of dialogue. Buber (as cited in Czubaroff, 2000) views inclusion as the decisive

characteristic of dialogue. Relational dialogue is viewed by Uhl-Bien (2006) as the way in which relational leadership can bring organizational members together to interact and exchange ideas in order to further involve people in the organization, ultimately reproducing leadership at multiple levels throughout the school for fulfilling tasks of various complexities. Umbreit, Coates, and Vos (2007) suggest that there must be a greater focus on defining what restorative dialogue is and examining dialogue such that it can be measured while honouring all the voices that participate in the dialogue.

Uhl-Bien (2006) states that relational leadership is a “social influence process through which emergent coordination (i.e., evolving social order) and change (i.e., new values, attitudes, approaches, behaviors, ideologies, etc.) are constructed and produced” (p. 668). Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) view relational leadership as recognizing the networks of relationships within which leadership leads, and uphold that leaders must constantly consider who they are and how they lead in relation to their followers. In moving from an individual perspective to a relational perspective, context becomes an important factor in leading, for one’s social reality is highly influenced by the context within which one relates (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Personal Connection to Restorative Approaches

Prior to teaching at the high school level, I was employed as a youth worker for a community organization investing in building relationships with high school aged students. This position taught me the value of developing ways to relate to adolescents to establish a mutual relationship of trust. When I entered the classroom as a teacher, I implemented many of the relational skills I had used as a youth worker, seeking to advocate for the best interests of students. Students articulated that they appreciated the

classroom environment that I established. This led me on a journey of reflecting on my relational approaches and why students appreciate my classroom. During my Master's research (Webb, 2009) I examined student perceptions of discretion in discipline, examining student perceptions of the rationale teachers employ for responding to conflict and misbehaviour. I analyzed student responses from a restorative perspective. My research revealed that a restorative approach to addressing conflict would correspond with the needs of students in terms of how they desire to respond to and resolve conflict and misbehaviour. Following my Master's degree, I was trained by the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) in basic restorative approaches, the use of circles, and community responses to misbehaviour. I worked part time at my school as *restorative support*, providing proactive and reactive restorative responses for students and staff. I also trained others in restorative approaches. This propelled me to continue to study restorative approaches in the Joint PhD program in Education at Brock University, shifting my focus from restorative justice to that of restorative practices. I began to consider the larger picture, where restorative practices focus on restorative approaches as a whole-school relational philosophy that is embedded in the culture of the school amongst all members of the school community, rather than only focus on restorative approaches as a response to misbehaviour as was the emphasis in a restorative justice paradigm. Furthermore, I sought to investigate the role of leadership in establishing a whole-school restorative philosophy and how restorative practices could be established in all facets of a school. As stated by Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000), "the more meaning I have for a topic, the more interest I have to study it" (p. 560).

A Conceptual Restorative Framework

Klenke (2008) and Yin (2003) uphold the conceptual framework as critical, for it serves as a filter for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. This research is rooted in the concept of restorative, and the role of leadership in undertaking a change process to implement and sustain a restorative culture. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) stress that successful implementation of a restorative philosophy in a school requires a significant change in culture. Vaandering (2014a) upholds that a restorative philosophy “relies on a *relationship-based, dialogic framework* [italics added] that contrasts with the more common hierarchical, power-based structure” (p. 64). Likewise, Blood and Thorsborne posit that for culture change to take place, leadership must invest in developing healthy relationships and dialoguing. The practices of restorative practices must be employed by leaders to support members in learning and employing the restorative philosophy to impact the culture of the school community.

Examining the process of leading restorative culture change in schools, the conceptual framework begins with literature examining the change process. The conceptual framework then provides a foundation for researching the leading of restorative culture change in schools in areas where it is underdeveloped, specifically around the related restorative themes of relationships and dialogue. The framework enables the researcher to address the research questions, using dialogue and relationships as central concepts for examining leadership practices in the restorative change process, for assessing how members of the school community experience the implementation of change and for evaluating how restorative practices are embedded in the current school culture. The following section examines relevant theory and literature that are integral to

the framework for researching the leading of restorative culture change in schools.

Leading Culture Change

Fullan (2007) speaks to the leadership required to navigate cultural change. He proposes components that a leader must navigate to create positive change including: *moral purpose, understanding the change process, relationship building, and knowledge creation and sharing.*

Moral purpose implies that people have a desire to improve the lives of others. Fullan (2007) posits that moral purpose is about both goals and processes, for to fulfil a moral vision one must treat followers fairly, or a leader will have no followers. Moral purpose is required for an organization to maintain positive performance over time, for a leader's inability to sustain moral purpose results in fluctuating performance.

Fullan (2007) stresses that the paradox of *organizational change* is that "transformation would not be possible without accompanying messiness" (p. 31). In taking on this change, he notes that all school change processes experience an *implementation dip*, whereby followers experience a decrease in confidence and performance as they develop new skills and strategies for implementing the change. Fullan refers to the changing of culture as *reculturing*, or a process that "activates and deepens moral purpose through collaborative work cultures that respect differences and constantly build and test knowledge against measurable results" (p. 44).

Fullan (2007) views *relationships*, moral purpose, and organizational success as closely intertwined. Kouzes and Posner (as cited in Fullan, 2007) state that the difference between ineffective leaders and effective leaders is in how much they care. Fullan's call for positive relationships echoes the core of restorative practices which seeks to build

positive relationships, establishing a school community where each member of the community is valued (Vaandering, 2009).

In speaking to knowledge creating and sharing in organizations, Fullan (2007) advises: “If you remember one thing about information, it is that it only becomes valuable in a *social context*” (p. 78). As a result, Fullan advocates that leaders create settings and spaces whereby organizational members can create knowledge and share learning. In Fullan’s research, once teachers experience the opportunity to share knowledge, they always thirst for more.

Expanding on the need for caring and relations, Smylie, Murphy, and Louis (2016) speak to *caring school leadership*, leadership that seeks to develop communities of care in school. They state, “The most immediate context of caring is a person’s proximal social relationships (Smylie et al., 2016, p. 12). Smylie et al. propose that schools must consider care at both intrapersonal levels and at organizational levels. They note that caring leadership, “does not rest on contractual obligation, power of authority, coercion, or expectation of return” (p. 6). At the intrapersonal level, caring leaders seek to understand others in the organization and to advocate on the behalf of others in the school. Traditionally one may consider how students benefit from care, but Smylie et al. posit that teachers and others in the school community can benefit from caring school leadership. While caring is often connected to the relational side of leadership, they also propose that caring leadership must be considered holistically in other organizational aspects of school including culture change, the school’s mission and vision, expectations for teachers and students, assessment, academic support, responses to conflict, and decision-making.

Vaandering (2014a) stresses that a restorative philosophy contrasts with hierarchical and power-based systems. Blackmore (2013) proposes a *feminist critical perspective* in examining school leadership and culture change, examining power structures that exist in leading schools. She suggests that “leadership is a relational practice built on trust and respect and not just what individuals do” (p. 151). Hartley (as cited in Blackmore, 2013) argues that school has taken on a personalized narrative that ignores the relational nature of learning. In building trust and respect and thereby upholding relationality, Blackmore calls for greater diversity in leadership, modelled around social justice, representation, and inclusiveness, specifically examining how these concepts are racialized and genderized. She notes that examining leadership from a critical feminist perspective and postcolonial perspective means that leadership must continually be evaluating how leadership is shaped by contextual factors including the organization, the culture, and structural limitations. She proposes that the feminist leader is always asking, “What is the problem being defined here, why now, who benefits from this policy and who loses out?” (p. 151). In speaking to feminist leadership, Blackmore notes the central role of emotions and responding to emotions when leading. She states that organizations, by their nature, involve emotions. These emotions must be recognized when identities of members of the school community are wrapped up in hierarchical power structures that can inhibit cultural change.

The work of Fullan (2007), Smylie et al. (2016), and Blackmore (2013) provides a context for examining a school’s journey toward implementing and realizing restorative culture change.

A Relational Restorative Perspective

Llewellyn et al. (2013) observe that a stronger theoretical framework developed around restorative justice as relational is required. The relational restorative framework will be developed through *Relational Leadership Theory* as proposed by Uhl-Bien (2006) and dialogue, building on existing theory that advocates for relational foundations for restorative research and restorative practices.

Relational leadership theory. In examining relational leadership theory, Uhl-Bien (2006) urges for the need to conceive relational perspectives from both a traditional perspective of leadership whereby the focus is on the attributes of leaders, and from a social constructionist approach, for reality is constantly evolving through the multiple realities that are brought together through relational processes. In the relational context, school leaders must ask new questions: How are schools designed to engage relationally? How is leadership viewed through a relational perspective? How are decisions made to be reality in a collective and collaborative structure? Schools are no longer analyzed on the basis of individuals, but analysis starts with relationships. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) challenge those who believe in a relational ontology to view school leadership not from structure and the manipulation of people but rather as communities of people in relation. Relational leadership theory has not been employed as a perspective for studying restorative practices in restorative literature.

Dialogue and relationships. Barrett (2013) examined restorative dialogue through Habermas' discourse theory, examining restorative encounters and their effectiveness. In his three-world concept, Habermas speaks to the use of language, and how language results in shared understanding and coordinated actions. Language can be

used to speak to an objective or factual world; language can be used to speak to our internal selves: that being our intentions and feelings; and language can be used for establishing and developing our social world, developing appropriate relationships and behaviour expectations (Habermas, as cited in Barrett, 2013). While Barrett viewed this theoretical foundation as promising for understanding dialogue in relation to restorative approaches, she also proposes that the structure of dialogue in relation to restorative theory and discourse needs further research and articulation.

Dialogue and relational leadership theory. In *Dialogue in Organizations: Developing Relational Leadership* (2015), Reitz examines the connection between Buberian dialogue (Buber, 1923/1970) and relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006). She calls for inquiry into the “nature and quality of relating within organizations” (p. 2), challenging readers to consider relationships and communities as solutions to organizational problems rather than limiting these themes to conference seminars. Reitz cites the growing interest in “the process of leadership and how leadership is constructed in relation” (p. 5).

In speaking to the construction of leadership out of the context of relational leadership theory, Reitz (2015) stresses four points. First, that the construction of leadership occurs in the encounter of individuals through language. These encounters are complex, subjective, dynamic, and messy. Second, leadership is constructed in a bumpy space, whereby those in the encounter need to navigate judgments, difference, and anxieties. Third, the leader must examine the perceptions of busyness and worthwhileness, and how these perceptions on both the part of the leader and the follower might impact relational encounters. Finally, complexity of subjective encounters means

that leaders must be prepared for unpredictable and ambiguous outcomes which will need to continue to be navigated. These contrast with predominant assumptions about leadership being a smooth construction, dictated by specific processes whereby leaders possess power and influence relationships, and thereby the responses of followers.

Reitz (2015) examines the definitions and understandings of dialogue as viewed in different literature. She explains that dialogue is often assumed to be defined as a static concept that takes place in a harmonious context amongst those involved, as each person extends his or her point of view in an “elegant and skilful” (p. 212) way. She offers an alternative view to this assumption, for she views dialogue as working with and out of conflict, for when humans enter into dialogue and voice different views, then “conflict is inevitable” (p. 212). She stresses that if conflict is inherent in dialogue, then conflict, as part of a broader view, is a part of being in relation. She names that when people enter into dialogue with different views, contexts, and interpretations, then dialogue is not going to be a perfect process. Dialogue is messy, and when we enter into messy processes, it is likely that dialogic outcomes will be messy due to the subjective nature of the process. She urges dialogic leaders to appreciate and embrace the messiness, pushing them to continually be in dialogue to continue to generate meaning with their followers.

In the context of relational leadership and dialogue, Reitz (2015) speaks to a theory of leader–follower *encounters*, rather than leader–follower relations. Using the idea of encounter, originally used by Kaufmann (1970) in his translation of *I and Thou* (Buber, 1923/1970), she hopes to push researchers to expand their area of inquiry beyond the relational paradigm. Furthermore, Reitz desires that researchers expand their views of what it means to “be in the moment of relation” (p. 221). She feels that speaking of

encounters as moments of relation changes how one views the relational dynamic of relational leadership. Reitz's work connects the theories of *relational leadership theory* and *dialogue*, serving as a foundation for helping to conceptualize restorative practices in a new way. Reitz adds that beyond her own work, she has not seen research, or literature, that "specifically aims to explore how I–Thou dialogue might contribute to relational leadership theory, or vice versa" (p. 37)

Through a framework of leading cultural change (Blackmore, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Smylie et al., 2016), relational leadership theory (Reitz 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006), and a theory of dialogue (Buber, 1923/1970; Reitz 2015), I seek to build on the work of previous research, adding to the scaffolding of restorative theory in order to fill in theoretical gaps, such that relational restorative theory can be strengthened as a foundation for evaluating the leading of restorative culture change. The framework serves to set the foundation for researching the role of leadership in implementing and sustaining restorative culture in schools.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Blood (2005) states, “The modern day restorative practitioner needs a solid grounding in restorative practices; culture change, leadership, productive pedagogies and the various theories and practices that inform education” (pp. 13–14). The literature review seeks to unify restorative literature as it pertains to employing restorative practices and leading restorative culture change. The chapter commences by expanding on the literature relevant to relational leadership theory (RLT) and dialogue as foundational themes for addressing gaps in current restorative literature. The literature review then expands on topics from the introduction and the conceptual framework relevant to restorative practices and this research: *leadership theory, change literature, culture literature, power and critical theory, social capital, additional literature of restoration, and progressive discipline legislation.*

Relational Leadership

The primary element in implementing organizational change is leadership committed to sustained change (Blood, 2005; Costello et al., 2009; Morrison et al., 2005). Wright (2009) defines leadership as “a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs, or values of another person” (p. 8). Restorative literature stresses that relationships are foundational for implementing and upholding a restorative culture (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Wright adds that leadership in its most basic form consists of two people in relationship, whereby one seeks to influence or lead the other. School leaders seek to enhance learning, improve classroom pedagogy, and support social development in the classroom (Blood, 2005).

Schnell (2002) describes that through restorative approaches, one comes to understand: “the fundamental importance of relationships in achieving real sustainable success in nearly any life circumstance, be it family, organizations or community” (p. 11). Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2013) maintain that leadership revolves around relationships, and that relationships are critical for effective leadership. Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) also state that leadership needs to converge around relationality. Komives et al. define *relational leadership* as “a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change” (p. 98). They believe that through shared values, leaders and followers commit to work together in order to bring about change.

The relational leader does not lead through persuading and managing. Rather, the relational leader establishes open dialogue, upholding the diverse viewpoints and voices within the school, addressing moments of difference as opportunities for learning (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). The restorative mindset, first and foremost, establishes how one views another when entering into relation. The relational leader is led by *relational integrity*, whereby a leader’s responsibility manifests itself in everyday relationships, focusing not on an individual’s attributes, but rather on leading and living well in relation with others (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011):

For if we believe we are always speaking and acting in relation to others and that we are constantly shaping social meanings, ‘realities’ and identities in our conversations and interactions, then we not only need a reflexive awareness of how we do so, but to recognize our responsibility to act and relate in ethical ways. (p. 1439)

There are two central perspectives that emerge out of research when speaking to relational leadership. Ospina (2012) observes the tension of the two relational leadership perspectives being viewed in terms of agency, or the individual: versus being viewed as structure, or the collective. Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) uphold that we can view these two perspectives as incommensurable, or that we can gain insight into relational leadership through examining both perspectives. Uhl-Bien (2006) refers to relational leadership that focuses on “identifying attributes of individuals” (p. 654) as an *entitative perspective*, whereas leadership that focuses on interpersonal processes through social construction as a *relational perspective*. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) endorse a relational leadership ontology as being fulfilled in social experience through examining the intersubjective space as leaders relate to others within the organization.

The entitative perspective examines relational leadership by examining attributes of individuals as they live in relation. Uhl-Bien (2006) describes the most prominent entitative approach as *leader–member exchange* (LMX), where “leadership occurs when leaders and followers are able to develop effective relationships (partnerships) that result in incremental influence” (p. 656). Because LMX examines leadership from the perspective of the behaviours of individuals, it is considered entitative. In the entitative perspective, leadership is examined from an objective reality, seeking to view relationships through an individual’s views, self-perception, and personal attributes. Entitative perspectives examine leadership in terms of measuring the individual, measuring individual attributes, and how these attributes change through interpersonal relationships. The entitative perspective assumes that organizational structures are already in place for establishing relationships (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Entitative perspectives in

terms of relational leadership arise out of a modernist perspective whereby truth is revealed through objects of study. Reality is viewed as concrete, whereby the study of the attributes and behaviours of individuals in relation provides a window into the influence of relationships in the leader–follower context (Ashkanasy, Paulsen, & Tee, 2012; Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012).

Relational perspectives examine relational leadership in terms of relatedness, or the intersubjective processes of being in relation with others; it is a shift from the individual to the collective. Meaning is constructed out of examining the processes of leading through relation and how these processes create meaning within individual relationships and within the larger social context (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) stress that a relational ontology forces one to rethink the nature of reality, for reality is intersubjective, discovered through dialogue and interactions with others rather than revealed through one's individual attributes. The relational perspective of relational leadership is viewed out of a social constructionist perspective, whereby relatedness is an ongoing social construction. Knowing is revealed through relating (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Fletcher (2012) stresses that meaning is continually being negotiated through relational interactions, founded in the contextual environment established by leadership. The point of measurement in this perspective is in examining communication, or dialogue: the medium where social construction is established and refined. Refinement is an ongoing process, influenced by a multitude of social and discretionary factors. *Relational* leadership philosophy examines leadership as a *process* of the construction of ever-developing attitudes, approaches, beliefs, and principles.

Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) call attention to the postmodern roots of relational perspectives, emphasizing that truth is discovered through various interpretations of meaning as found in relational spaces. They stress that relationality is central to a constructionist perspective of leadership, for meaning is built around interaction. Rather than the window metaphor of an entitative view, Uhl-Bien and Ospina view relational leadership as a lantern, whereby light is shone on the wide-open spaces and corners in order that meaning is attained through knowledge gained in relational spaces. Through being led to continually interpret reality through relations, organizational members are placed in a position to be empowered to shape reality. These members begin to redefine the space through building relations. As relationships change, the space changes, thereby changing the culture.

Uhl-Bien (2006) proposes a new framework for leadership theory, that being relational leadership theory (RLT). “Relational Leadership Theory focuses on the *relational processes* by which leadership is produced and enabled” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 667). Relational leadership theory is congruent with a restorative framework, whereby relationality is key to examining the effectiveness of restorative processes, specifically how dialogue serves to fill the intersubjective space in order that meaning can be created through relating. A key to RLT is that relational leadership cannot be studied by solely examining individual attributes of leaders. RLT recognizes that relational and social context must also be examined to fully understand relational leadership. Research in an RLT framework “would allow us to consider processes that are not just about the quality of the relationship or even the type of relationship, but rather about the social dynamics by which leadership relationships form and evolve in the workplace” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p.

672). She contends that RLT is a “process theory of leadership” (p. 666), seeking to understand the relational process in which leadership develops and functions. RLT seeks to operationalize both the entitative and relational paradigms. In RLT, leadership is viewed as a mutual influence process whereby leadership can happen in multiple directions amongst organizational members. Uhl-Bien views relational processes as leadership when “social influence that is generated contributes to the emergence of social order (i.e. emergent coordination) and new approaches, attitudes, goals, etc. (i.e. change)” (p. 667). She adds that when leadership is a shared venture within a school, then those involved in leading take ownership for developing the structure and culture of the organization. Harding (2011) notes that shared leadership is needed for restorative practices to be successful. In exploring relational dynamics, Uhl-Bien suggests one must look at: the sharing and joint creation of leadership, how and why social interactions influence leadership relations, and how building relationships helps to develop a positive culture that develops social order.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) seek to conceptualize RLT through upholding the need to pay attention to subtleties. They suggest these subtleties can often be ignored for they seem simplistic and obvious. Yet, they are often overlooked or not employed:

1. Create open dialogue that allows participants to not be judged and to be open to new perspectives.
2. Address dialogue participants when there are moments of difference, upholding perspective while seeking to unify those involved.
3. Create scenic moments that establish a context for working through difference.
4. Uphold relational integrity, be accountable, and ensure actions are defensible.

5. Be attuned to needs of the people in the organization and anticipate the potential conversations in order to lead and facilitate dialogue.

April (1999) suggests that leadership holds the responsibility for creating opportunities for members of organizations to communicate through dialogue. This dialogue provides an avenue for changing how individuals view one another.

Reitz (2015) posits that a relational focus of leadership changes the traditional understanding of what it means to be a leader, shifting from a focus of the leader as superior “towards something which allows more space for dynamic two-way influence” (p. 8). She upholds that this influence is found in dialogue, where meaning is socially constructed through relational dialogue. I examine dialogue more deeply in the following section, in order to continue to scaffold the restorative framework. Dialogue is conceptualized through Martin Buber’s theory of dialogue.

Dialogue

Martin Buber is deemed to be the most influential theorist in the development of theory of dialogue. Dialogue is a central concept for relationships, and thereby, for restoration (Barrett, 2013). For Buber, relationships are central to human existence. One’s recognition of another in dialogue results in the other being recognized (Buber, 1923/1970); therefore relation is fulfilled in dialogue, the space where individuals interrelate. Pure dialogue is the means by which relations are strengthened. He viewed dialogue as a characteristic of human relating that combatted a post-World War II German culture, whereby individuals failed to recognize the value and worth of other people (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). The meeting of individuals is central to Martin Buber’s dialogic philosophy (Czubaroff, 2000). People find meaning in dialogue, when

their scope of knowledge goes beyond self and meets the knowledge of others in the shared space of the dialogic interchange (Freidman, 1960; Freire, 2000).

Genuine dialogue is dependent on the view one has of self and the view one has of others. In terms of self, one dialoguing needs to come to others in truth, communicating one's own reality (Czubaroff, 2000; Friedman, 1960). When viewing others in dialogue, it is essential that participants have the mind of the other, extending one's self to consider the possible realities of other contributors in the dialogue (Buber, 1961; Czubaroff, 2000). In his book, the *Knowledge of Man* (1965), Buber states four attitudes that participants of dialogue must have toward one another: *authenticity*, *inclusion*, *confirmation*, and *presentness*. Authenticity implies that participants are direct and honest in communicating information and feelings relevant to the dialogue. When people share, information should consider the needs of everyone involved in the dialogue. Inclusion ensures that one dialoguing always imagines feelings and occurrences from the perspective of the other. Confirmation assures that participants in the dialogue are viewed as persons with value. While one may not agree with another one's position, she can uphold his or her worth as an individual. Finally, presentness implies giving of one's full self to the others in the dialogue. Participants need to be active listeners, avoid distractions, and fully engage with the stories and emotions of others dialoguing. Freire (2000) states that if people can dialogue in a spirit of hope, dialogue can be transforming for both the participants and for greater society.

Buber (1961) believes that relations in education are founded on authentic dialogue, forming the core of education. It is necessary for all members of a school community to engage in dialogue that honours others and considers the others'

perspective. Freire (2000) believes that “preoccupation with the content of dialogue is really preoccupation with the program content of education” (p. 93). Stewart and Zediker (2000) believe that in today’s classroom, rather than engage with others who might have differing viewpoints, students are more likely to offer artificial feedback. Stewart and Zediker posit, “superficial agreement substitutes for engaged dialogue” (p. 235): participants acknowledge at a superficial level that they have connected, but the interaction has not espoused Buber’s four attitudes of genuine dialogue.

When school administration leads members of the school in genuine dialogue, a culture can be developed that engages everyone in the school community in the learning process. Freire (2000) believes that communication is essential to education, for genuine dialogue demands critical thinking and thereby creates critical thinkers. Bickmore (2011) and Parker (2014) stress that the purpose of dialogue is to develop a common understanding, unlike a debate or a discussion where the purpose is to competitively prove a point. Dialogue should serve to expand one’s knowledge and one’s perspective as students and/or educators engage in learning from one another. Bohm et al. (1991) view dialogue as a way to delve into a field of study. Dialogue should serve to inform and engage contributors, thereby enabling them to deepen understanding in order to shape their worldview.

In 1923, Martin Buber wrote the following in his book *I and Thou*:

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.

The basic words are not single words but word pairs.

One basic word is the word pair I–You [or I–Thou].

The other basic word is the word pair I–It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It.

Thus the I of man is also twofold.

For the I of the basic word I–You is different from that in the basic I–It. (Buber, 1923/1970, p. 55)

Friedman (1960) maintains that *I–Thou* or *I–You* is the principal word of relation. Buber believed that one dialogues in relation when viewing the other as *you* rather than *it*. I–Thou emphasizes a reciprocal and all-embracing relationship between individuals. In the I–Thou relationship individuals are characterized by qualities including honesty, trust, lacking judgment of others, frankness, and love, whereby those in the relationship exhibit care and respect for each other (Johannesen, 2000). If one doesn't perceive others as *Thou*, upholding their worth as persons, then they are viewing others as *it*, or as objects (W. J. Morgan & Guilherme, 2012). Buber says that I–It can also be referred to as *I–He* or *I–She*. In referring to others as *it*, *he*, or *she* rather than by *Thou* (often implied when using one's name), we again uphold individuals as objects rather than in relation. In viewing individuals as objects, the I–It relation inhibits dialogue for the I in I–It uses people for personal gain whereas the I in I–Thou values the other, thereby creating a genuine dialogue (W. J. Morgan & Guilherme).

No relationship can be considered fully I–Thou or I–It. Buber (1923/1970) described this as a *person–ego* continuum. In being fully person, an individual always looks to others, seeking to be in relation. In being fully ego an individual only looks to self, viewing others as objects. Czubaroff (2000) conveyed that no individual is fully ego,

nor is anyone fully person. Relationships are situated in context, power, and circumstances. As a result, one aims to relate and dialogue at the I–Thou end of the continuum, but complex contexts, culture, power imbalances, and situations prevent relationships from living out in a full I–Thou. Reitz (2015) stresses that leadership comes with many assumptions including unidirectional communication and that leadership can become a synonym for hierarchy. Kazepides (2010) states that we cannot uphold dialogue as utopic: because it involves people, dialogue is imperfect. Yet, value can exude from dialogue, even if it is flawed. In fact, dialogue enables flaws to be revealed. Only in revealing flaws and inadequacies can they be addressed.

While dialogue provides a valuable opportunity for fulfilling relations and for learning, it also presents many challenges. W.J. Morgan and Guilherme (2012) view dialogue as “sustained, constant and tireless” (p. 989). Stewart and Zediker (2000) recognize that dialogue is a tense endeavor, asking students to engage in cultures and contexts that are unfamiliar. Bohm et al. (1991) see this tension as leading to fear. They push for a metadialogue, educating students on the value of dialogue in order to alleviate anxiety and to illuminate the benefits of dialoguing. Bickmore (2011) challenges educators to consider how restorative dialogue addresses the reality of diversity and inequality amongst students. She states that some students can be viewed “primarily as victims and offenders (even as somehow defective individuals), more than as learners” (p. 8). How can classroom communities ensure that everyone is included and their voices are heard? Bickmore adds that dialogue can be democratic, but issues of power must be addressed. She believes that democratic dialogue can occur through restorative programming in schools, student participation in school decision-making, and by

providing opportunities for students to dialogue about conflict both through incidents and through classroom curriculum. McCambridge (2003) suggests that power, status, and authority must remain outside of dialogue in order for democratic conversations to take place. Vaandering (2013) explains that a restorative framework is effective for establishing relational culture change but it is dependent on upholding equitable and impartial dialogue. Educational organizations can easily step in to negate dialogue when they feel that power is being lost, but these interventions can prevent true change from taking place.

Relationality and Leadership Theory

Relational leadership theory (RLT; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011, Uhl-Bien, 2006, Uhl-Bien & Opsina, 2012) has been employed as a means for structuring the conceptual framework around relationships and leadership. Further, leadership theory can help us to understand relationality and relational processes that support researching the leading of restorative practices, out of a relational perspective. The following section expands on four leadership theories that uphold relationality and thereby are influential in researching the implementing, leading, and sustaining of restorative practices: *servant leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *transformative leadership*, and *distributed leadership*.

Relationality and Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is attributed to Robert Greenleaf (1970), who described the servant leader as one who is always seeking something better, always searching and listening for new ways in which to serve others. Five relational processes arise from servant leadership that uphold relationality and provide a context for researching

restorative practices and the relational process inherent in relationality: *meeting needs, trusting, listening and empathizing*, and *loving*.

Meeting needs. Northouse (2013) emphasizes that the primary concern of the servant leader is his/her followers. The servant leader seeks to empathize with his/her followers, nurturing them, empowering them, and supporting them in meeting their needs such that they might flourish in the wholeness of who they are. The servant leader believes that caring for the needs of followers has a trickle-up effect, ultimately working for the greater good of the organization, the surrounding community, and society as a whole. Vaandering (2010) stresses that meeting the needs of followers is a restorative practice that not only impacts the individual but also results in structural changes to the organization as a healthy culture is developed that employs communication and upholds the value of every individual in the organization, as individuals take ownership of the organization. Relational leadership theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006) also stresses that positive social influence results in new values, behaviours, and attitudes that impact ownership within the organization.

Zehr (2005) & Vaandering (2014a) highlight that restorative approaches shift the focus from rules to needs, whereby relational interaction amongst organizational members provides a foundation for change. Greenleaf and Spears (2002), in speaking to *servant leadership*, see the servant leader acting out of the needs of the other, persevering and hypothesizing how to meet the needs of followers rather than addressing needs of followers through one's conscience, or "normative expectations" (p. 28). They view the primary difference in servant leadership as the care taken by the leader to ensure that the others in the organization are given high priority and cared for. They suggest the best test

to administer to see if the leader is fulfilling this goal is to ask: “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (p. 27).

Covey (2002), in the foreword of *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, suggests that high-trust cultures empower followers, for one viewed as a boss is now recognized as a servant and systems and structures are viewed as servant processes that support nurturing. He deems that creating this culture requires trustworthy individuals who can share trust organizationally in order that the vision of the servant leader becomes a shared vision.

Trusting. Greenleaf (1970) believes that followers respond to servant leaders because the servant leaders are proven and trusted as servants. Greenleaf stresses that when leaders establish goals and a vision, they must elicit trust. This is especially true when the established goals involve high risk or a grand vision. Trust requires followers to have confidence in the values of the leader, to believe in the competence of the leader, and to observe a spirit that can uphold a grand vision. Greenleaf valued community, for in community he recognized the potential for all individuals to experience respect, trust, and personal growth (Northouse, 2013).

Listening and empathizing. In upholding servant leadership, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) stress the need to create a culture of listening. In responding to problems, the leader needs to ask, “What is it?” and “What can I do about it?” (p. 30). This allows the leader to listen, take ownership, and support followers rather than pin problems on followers. They described the best test of communication as, “Are we listening?” Listening allows leaders to engage in deep communication and ultimately find meaning

in the experience of others. This results in *acceptance* of followers, receiving what is offered, and results in *empathy* towards followers, projecting one's consciousness onto another individual. Greenleaf and Spears view the opposite of acceptance and empathy as rejection, or literally the *throwing out* of others. This view negates the ability to gain the trust of followers and denies the opportunity for the servant leader to serve and meet needs. For Greenleaf and Spears, leaders who accept people for who they are, and lead them to "grow taller" (p. 35) as individuals, ultimately create a strong team and a strong culture.

Loving. Greenleaf and Spears (2002) stress that organizations need to be *liable* for their people. In a school, leadership needs to be liable for staff and students, taking ownership of their needs and their growth as humans: "Love is an undefinable term, and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. But it begins, I believe with one absolute condition: unlimited liability" (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002, p. 52). They see modern institutions as limiting the liability of those who desire to serve. They believe liability requires a face-to-face group that serves each other, ultimately resulting in trust and respect. Without this community, trust, respect, and ethical behaviour are difficult for the "young to learn and the old to maintain" (p. 52). Ultimately, they view a community that is serving each other as a community that is *caring*. Caring for others not only establishes a foundation for the school but also establishes an ethic for how to interact with people in society, establishing a foundation for investing in relationships.

Servant leadership extols many attributes of restorative literature and philosophy including the value and worth of individuals (Vaandering, 2009), upholding the needs of all individuals (Vaandering, 2010; Zehr, 2002), providing high support and high

expectations (Costello et al., 2009), and building a sense of trust through not holding grudges in times of conflict but using these episodes as opportunities for learning (Bickmore, 2011).

Relationality and Transformational Leadership

As the title suggests, transformational leadership is a style of leadership that transforms people (Northouse, 2013). In speaking to relational restorative culture change, Blood and Thorsborne (2005) state that restorative culture change is more likely to be effective when it is transformational. Murrell (1997) believes that relationships that are nonhierarchical can still be influential and transformational, viewed as a form of leadership. Transformational leadership supports relationality in *meeting the needs of followers, leading to intrinsically motivate, and developing two-way leadership*.

Meeting the needs of followers. The seminal book on transformational leadership was Burns's (1978) *Leadership*. In the book, Burns proposes that transformational leaders are "leaders of people who tap the motives of followers in order to better reach the goals of leaders and followers" (p. 18). He believes that transformational leaders establish goals and a vision whereby the leader could examine and thereby meet the higher level needs of his/her followers. In doing so, the followers' motivational states would be transformed, increasing their investment in the organization, thereby creating a culture where leaders and followers would raise the personal investment of each other in the organization.

Leading to intrinsically motivate. Bass and Riggio (2006) stress that transformational leadership is about increasing the intrinsic motivation of followers. In doing so, transformational leadership seeks to shift the focus from the individual to the

organization (Bass, 1985). As the leader invests in followers and establishes relations with followers, meeting their needs and increasing their motivation, the focus of the follower turns to the focus of the leader, that being the organizational goals.

Developing two-way leadership. Transformational leadership is a two-way process that involves leaders and followers rather than a uni-directional process. The concept of transforming followers to become something more is appealing to both leaders and followers. Enabling followers to have their needs met and to flourish is attractive both individually and organizationally. Finally, transformational leaders speak to values, an important asset in a character-driven society (Northouse, 2013).

Burns's (1978) original concept of transformational leadership has made important contributions to the field of leadership studies and continues to shape how we view leadership, specifically in a restorative paradigm. The concepts of high support and high expectations are integral to the *social discipline window* (Costello et al., 2009). Speaking to the needs of individuals is a common theme in restorative literature (Vaandering, 2010; Zehr, 2002). The notion of intrinsic motivation, specifically in terms of employing restorative approaches to develop internal responses by students to instances of misbehavior, is a concept used by Kohn (1996) when speaking to restorative practices.

Relationality and Transformative Leadership

The modern conception of transformative leadership comes out of the work of Carolyn Shields (2010). Transformative leadership seeks to link education to the social context it is embedded in. Vaandering (2010) proposes that restorative theory has often been conceptualized in terms of student conduct rather than in terms of relationship and

community. She deems that little research has focused on the social context of students, and as a result the focus has been on changing student behaviour to fulfill adult purposes rather than to fulfill student needs: “It is my premise that in order for RJ to be effective and sustainable it must be understood first and foremost through a critical lens that recognizes the systemic, institutional, and structural dimensions of power relations in school communities” (p. 151). Likewise, the role of transformative leadership is to understand how social context is situated in power, privilege, and dominating structures (Shields, 2010).

Shields (2010) compares and contrasts transformative leadership and transformational leadership. She views the emphasis of transformational leadership as upholding the best interests of the organization while she sees transformative leadership as emphasizing the social condition of followers and how this can be changed. Shields sees the goal of transformational leadership as ultimately creating organizational change, while she sees the goal of transformative leadership as a threefold goal impacting individuals, the organization, and society. While Shields sees the transformational leader as developing common purpose and goals for the organization, she views the transformative leader as one living with the challenge of upholding the needs of followers through activism and courage. Shields’s work is influenced by Freire, for Freire (as cited in Shields, 2010) believes that education doesn’t change society, but society would not change without education. Freire (2000) emphasizes the need for relationships and dialogue as the underpinnings of education, for without relationships he believes education is not an experience that transforms students. He states, “Each time the ‘thou’ is changed into an object, an ‘it,’ dialogue is subverted and education is changed to

deformation” (p. 89).

Van Oord (2013) states that “transformative leadership is characterized by its activist agenda and its overriding commitment to social justice, equality and a democratic society” (p. 422). Van Oord stresses that education is a critical process, examining power and seeking to develop transformative means to change and social relationships such that there is equality in relationship across the school organization. He stresses that the transformative leader allows students to be a part of decision-making processes and vision setting, in order that their educational experience is one that levels out power rather than hands power over to a select few. Likewise, Uhl-Bien (2006) stresses that a relational perspective of leadership seeks to focus on the collective rather than the individual, coevolving through ever-developing relations.

Shields (2010) stresses the need for transformative leadership to begin with critical reflection as the foundation for developing new understanding and ultimately enabling decision-making. The critical reflection examines power structures, seeking to provide a level playing field for all followers such that academic, civic, and social decisions are in the best interests of all organizational members. Shields maintains that transformative leadership upholds education in enabling each student to fulfil his or her potential because the educational environment is equitable for all. The followers, teachers and students alike, take this equitable stance with them into society.

The characteristics of transformative leadership model many features of restorative philosophy including critical approaches to change (Vaandering, 2010), student empowerment and voice (McCluskey, 2014b), and working *with* people to bring about individual and social change (Wachtel, 2012).

Relationality and Distributed Leadership

Spillane (2005) speaks to *distributed leadership*, and how distributed leadership is not about roles, structures, and functions but rather about leadership practice. This practice is fulfilled in *interactions* among school leaders, their followers, and the context they interact in:

From a distributed perspective, leadership is a system of practice comprised of a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situation. These interacting components must be understood together because the system is more than the sum of the component parts or practices. (Spillane, 2005, p. 150)

Likewise, relational leadership theory corresponds with distributed leadership in that “Relational Leadership Theory is the study of both *relationships* (interpersonal relationships as outcomes or as contexts for interactions) and relational dynamics (social interactions and social constructions) of leadership” (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 667).

Distributed leadership recognizes that leading a school does not fall within the hands of a single leader with superhuman actions but involves multiple leaders—formal and informal—who, through interaction, take on leadership roles within the school context in order to change the school culture (Darling-Hammond, 1988). Teachers need to be recognized as leaders both in and out of their classrooms, for teachers are crucial in the change process: the journey of reculturing a school. A culture that supports collaboration and learning amongst teachers enables teachers as architects of school culture change (Darling-Hammond, 1988). Consequently, the existing school culture influences the ability to improve school culture. Existing culture, administrative leadership, and decision-making structures provide the scaffolding for effective teacher

leadership for influencing culture change. Ultimately, empowering teachers as leaders supports cultivating culture and instruction, such that the end goal is increased student learning (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Blood and Thorsborne (2005), in speaking to restorative culture change, acknowledge that while leaders of organizations are integral for implementing restorative practices, leadership can be found in all members of school community: leadership cannot solely depend on a single individual.

Culture

McCall (2014) defines culture as “what everyone knows and nobody talks about” (p. 238). Crouch (2013) adds, “culture is what we make of the world” (p. 23). Ouchi and Johnson (as cited in Blood and Thorsborne, 2005) state that culture is “the way we do things around here” (p. 4.). Taylor (2004) articulates that culture reflects what is valued in an organization, and individuals will act according to the culture that exists. Fullan (2006) acknowledges that for change to take place in schools, pedagogy, curriculum, and professional development all need to change. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that addressing these things alone will not result in change that is embedded in the school, for these *theories of action* are incomplete:

These initiatives obviously can do some good but our change theory of action tells us that they have one fatal flaw. They base all the possibilities on producing more and better *individuals* as the route to changing the system. This individualistic bias is understandable – let’s get a high-quality principal in every school – but nonetheless incomplete. This strategy can at best in my estimation contribute about 30 per cent of the solution. The other 70 per cent depends on the culture or conditions under which people work. Thus, our theory of action informs us that

any strategy of change must simultaneously focus on changing individuals and the culture or system within which they work. (Fullan, 2007, p. 7)

Culture is the approach by which members of the school community go about their daily business (Hopkins & Reynolds as cited in Thomson, 2010). Culture is a social phenomenon created by the collective experiences of members of the school community (Schein, 2004).

Culture cannot be imposed on a school, for culture is created through social interactions within the institution (G. Morgan, 1986). Deal and Peterson (1999) believe that every human group has a foundation of a unifying myth, and it is in this myth that the group's worldview rests, serving as a foundation for the scaffolding of school culture. Schein (2004) speculates that culture originates in three different sources. First, culture is a product of the beliefs, values, and assumptions of those who started the organization. Second, culture arises out of the learning experiences of members of the school. Finally, culture is influenced by assumptions, values, and worldviews brought in by new school community members, including leadership, teachers, support staff, students, and the parent community.

Culture is revealed when, through shared experiences, members of the organization solve problems in relation to "external survival and internal integration" (Schein, 2004, p. 225). It should be noted that cultures can be positive and cultures can be negative. The unifying myth, the shared experiences in solving problems, and the sources of culture can create a social phenomenon that creates a positive culture in a flourishing organization. Likewise, the myth, the shared experiences, and the sources of culture may create a negative culture. In addition, culture—while created by social interactions—is a

function of an individual's perspective. Whereas one may see their culture as healthy and prosperous, another individual in the same organization may experience frustration and negativity as a result of the perceived culture.

While culture is shaped through social interactions, it is leadership within the school that has tremendous influence as a result of imposing her/his assumptions, values, and beliefs on the members that she/he leads (Schein, 2004). While one's first thought might be to consider school administration in the development of culture, Roby (2011) notes that both formal leadership and informal leadership can influence culture. Goldring (as cited in Roby, 2011) notes that relationships potentially have much greater power than formal roles and titles in an organization and as a result will shape the culture of a school in dramatic ways. Roby focuses specifically on the role of teacher leaders, whereby teachers can establish cultures that uphold exceptional learning for all students, as a mainstay in the school culture.

Leo and Wickenberg (2013) stress the importance of being aware of the professional norms and assumptions that have authority over the culture of the organization. Leadership needs to know what the norms are and needs to study theory on how to change them. To capture a picture of the culture of an organization, one must examine many factors including: purpose, mission, assumptions, beliefs, values, and norms (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The mission and purpose of a school, if it is articulated and stressed in an organization, can be the heart of a school culture, upholding the reason for a school's being and serving as the driving force for what people within the organization do and who they aim to be. Assumptions are preconscious views that drive one's behaviour. Beliefs are how one experiences, understands, and responds to the world

around one's self. Values are what an organization stands for. Finally, the norms in a school are embodied and enacted through the consolidation of the organizational and personal values, beliefs, and assumptions (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Leo and Wickenberg believe in a culture of high expectations, whereby the responsibility for creating culture is reflected through mission, policy, and members of the organization. Principals, teachers, and students alike should uphold high expectations for each other, for norms that are reinforced are seen to be sustainable. Culture is always a work in progress, requiring the constant investment of organizational members to be successful. Without intentional investment, culture takes on expectations from outside the culture, mission, and policy of the organization.

If there is a group of individuals, there will be a culture: It would not be correct to state that a school has "no culture." The corollary to this is that culture takes on the attributes of the strongest leaders. To grow the school culture toward a vision, formal school leadership needs to be intentional in taking steps toward potentially creating the desired culture. Leo and Wickenberg (2013) advocate for principals to continually direct the school community toward the school vision; to create opportunities for open dialogue around the school vision in order to build and clarify understanding; to distribute leadership in order to create a school culture whereby other members of the school community engage with, support, and lead new initiatives; and to develop policy that supports change initiatives that seek to fulfill the vision of the school.

Embedding a vision for a school culture requires school leadership to be intentional about creating conditions that are conducive to creating positive culture. Rhodes, Stevens, and Hemmings (2011) stress that a positive culture first requires

relational trust amongst the organization. They also advocate for leadership from both formal administration and teachers. A necessary form of leading is *modeling*, in order that, through relationships, these models will trickle down to the entire school community (Schein, 2004). Schein (2004) stresses that embedding culture requires leadership to pay attention to culture, to find ways to measure culture, and to seek to control those factors that they can. In measuring culture, Sahin (2011) deems that providing feedback after assessment is critical for culture to be embedded. This needs to happen amongst all levels of the school organization in order that there is opportunity to respond to needs and thereby make changes to embed the desired culture. Schein (2004) believes that how leadership responds to major incidents will highly influence culture. He also advocates for resources for teachers and students; the resources that a leader can attain, and how they are allocated will impact school culture. Regarding students, Rhodes et al. believe that intentionality in student–teacher relationships is critical. School structures including, student orientation programs, school timetables, learning spaces, and opportunities for formal student advisement can provide intentionality in linking students and teachers and thereby contribute to a positive culture.

Rhodes et al. (2011) see culture as the crux of innovation in schools. The culture needs to be such that innovation is what the people do. Crouch (2013) states that the only way to change culture is to make more of it. Culture is the mooring for everyday life in a school, and so an innovative culture is one that has its foundations in creative change, for this culture determines what meaningful practice looks like for all members of the school community (Rhodes et al., 2011). Fullan (2001b) expresses that how one views change and the need to build new culture is critical to the process. When culture change is

viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a meaningless exercise, then the attitude with which community members enter change will be one of moral purpose whereby individuals collaborate to propel change forward rather than halt it in its tracks.

A positive school culture aims to uphold the best interests of staff, students, and the community. Thomson (2010) expresses that positive school cultures generally have a justified and well-articulated philosophy for engaging in change. Positive school cultures are reflected in organizational language, supporting dialogue that brings the school community together in discussing learning (Rhodes et al., 2011; Thomson, 2010). In addition, positive school cultures generally have stable staff that is provided with the tools and the autonomy to engage in innovative change (Thomson, 2010). Roby (2011) speaks to the shifts that will be seen in a positive culture. Members of the school community will move from congeniality to collegiality, shifting from extrinsic motivators to intrinsic motivators and finally to moralistic motivators. Roby views relationships as moving from one's self-interest to a genuine interest in others, leading to relationships that move from contractual to covenantal. The responsibility for mentorship amongst members of the school community is a reciprocal relationship whereby each member is invested in other members. Finally, a school with positive culture moves from simply being operational amongst the members to a culture that views itself as a professional learning community. Each facet of Roby's positive culture moves from focus on self to focus on others; it is a shift from the needs of the individual to the needs of the community.

As previously mentioned, the irony of culture change is that it is the current culture that can prevent the creation of new cultures. Current structures embedded in

established cultures can prevent leadership from moving forward with the mission and vision (Hauge, Norenes, & Vedøy, 2014). Ultimately, a poor culture of learning has the greatest impact on students, denying them from learning at their full potential and flourishing as a student and as an individual. Impersonal cultures and competitive cultures not only can undermine student learning, but they can also have a deep impact on student safety (Kohn, 1998). School culture becomes harmful, potentially damaging students rather than helping them to grow. Thomson (2010) tells the story of students who have expressed anger over their school experience. They can be frustrated by curriculum, pedagogy, the way they are disciplined, and the student–teacher relationships they have in the school. These students expressed a desire for schools that work to meet individual needs rather than school structures that deliver education in a single way.

It has been said that changing culture is like rebuilding an airplane while it is in the air: It is a complex and rigorous process that takes place in a dynamic context. Alvesson (2012) suggests that culture is often addressed at the surface level, seeking to tackle phenomena within a school but failing to delve into the meaning behind them. School communities need to examine their story, dig deep into why they do things, and establish a vision and a plan for becoming the school they desire to be for the students and greater community served by the school. Elmore (2004), in speaking to changing cultures, states:

Cultures do not change by mandate; they change by the specific displacement of existing norms, structures, and processes by others; the process of cultural change depends fundamentally on modeling the new values and behavior that you expect to displace the existing ones. (p. 11)

Restorative culture change is a challenging undertaking requiring a sustained investment from all members of the community, starting with leadership. Macready (2009) states:

In developing a restorative school culture, it will be relevant for participants in the school community to move from their known and familiar practice to what it is possible to know and do, in a process of scaffolded learning. This process will involve dialogue and a willingness to build on what is familiar and working well. Awareness raising and training opportunities will assist this process, initially involving the leadership team and subsequently all members of the school community. (p. 217)

To assume and to invest in restorative culture change requires capturing the hearts of the people in the organization such that they are compelled to be a part of the change. Nonetheless, restorative change is not an easy endeavor; changing the mindsets of school staff may be the largest challenge for leadership. Change can be emotional, confusing, and frustrating for staff. They may resist or rebel. Leading the members of an organization through this conflict is essential for restorative change to take hold; leadership must have a systematic plan for moving forward (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

To change a culture to be restorative, schools need to talk about their current culture, naming the values upon which the school operates every day (Van Ness, 2014). It is necessary for leadership to be unsettled in regard to current culture, to feel convicted to invest in changing culture. Leadership needs to instill this unsettled-ness in the other staff members in the school to establish a foundation for change. McCall (2014) encourages schools to move from “how do we do things?” to “how can we do things?” (p. 238). Only

through naming where one is can a school start to think about where it might go.

Likewise, naming when culture has changed also requires naming where it has come from. It is important that an organization is able to recognize change in order that individuals can attribute change to the efforts being made to change culture rather than attributing change to unrelated factors, giving little credence to the investment made by the organization to be purposeful in creating culture change.

What does a changed restorative culture look like? Blood and Thorsborne (2005) identify that the language use by a school community reveals a change in culture. Drewery (2007) sees a changed restorative culture playing out in, “formal and informal interactions that are characterised by a desire to engage in respectful relationships at every level” (p. 207). Mirsky (2007) explains that culture change can be seen in students when they seek to advocate for their own safety and the safety of others. Rather than concealing problems and issues, students in a restorative culture entrust school staff with issues they see around the school. A restorative culture means that students take ownership for continuing to make their school a safer environment for everyone in the community. In an all-encompassing culture change, restorative thought permeates throughout the entire school. Van Ness (2014) stresses the importance of policies that reflect the restorative culture. Finally, McCluskey (2014a) reasons that a school strong in restorative culture will continue to have people say that the school is not restorative enough. Individuals who do not believe in restorative approaches will not ask for a school to be more restorative. The restorative school has individuals who are always seeking to better fulfill a vision of upholding the needs and best interests of the community through relationships: they believe that a school can always be more restorative.

Change in Schools

Change is critical to creating a new educational culture. To invest in educational change requires that one believes that the core of instruction, that being teaching and pedagogy, can be enhanced (Elmore, 2004). To enhance or improve the core of instruction means to “increase quality and performance over time” (Elmore, 2004, p. 221). Cuban (1988) describes two orders of change: a first order change maintains the status quo of the school, whereas a change of the second order impacts the culture, systems, or structure of the school, thereby impacting processes, practices, relationships, and assumptions embedded within the organization. Kendall et al. (2005) propose a four-stage model for evaluating school change. At the first level, change impacts inputs and processes including staffing, staff expertise, approaches to pedagogy, and strategies for supporting students. At the second level, first-level changes are implemented by key staff to change day-to-day experiences. At the third level, there is a measurable impact on sections of the school community, including staff, students, parents, and/or the community. At the fourth and final level, the changes start to impact individuals outside of the target community, impacting other students, teachers, or schools. If we desire to change whole schools, Thomson (2010) upholds these levels of change as a rubric by which schools can assess the change impact.

Schools need both intentional goals and intentional processes for implementing change. Elmore (2004) believes that school improvement is impossible without a theory or system on which to base the change process. Thomson (2010) argues that to move forward with change, schools must be clear on both the desired outcome and the process by which the outcome will be achieved, as this will dictate where the process ends up.

While literature on change often speaks to how to compel individuals to change, or how to make change something that individuals will engage in, the question of “change in the service of what?” (Elmore, 2004, p. 220) is seldom addressed in literature. Thomson stresses that organizations need to address who change is for and how they will benefit from it, before engaging in the change process. Likewise, the organization needs to be able to name the quality and performance that would indicate successful change, for the organization needs to evaluate the success of change endeavours.

Elmore (2004) stresses that, “if schools are not meeting expectations for learning, it is largely because *they don't know what to do.*” Thomson (2010) states that there are two primary areas where schooling falls short. First, too many children are disengaged, resulting in the students failing, or leaving the institution. Second, our schools still resemble a model from the 1800s whereby graduates are not prepared for entering our 21st century society. If there are students who are not making it through the system, or if the system is not adequately preparing students, then schools are failing students, the primary stakeholders in the educational process.

Thomson (2010) stresses that one of the primary reasons that school change initiatives may look different is a result of the two common end goals that people deem education to fulfill. On one hand, people view the end goal of education as preparing students for working in society, educating students to have the skills, behaviours, and attitudes necessary for contributing positively to a productive society. On the other hand, the end goal is viewed as creating independent and freethinking citizens who are able and willing to question the values and norms of society. They believe students should be able to test prevailing truths and justify their beliefs, promoting social justice and economic

integrity. “It is thus important to connect the reasons for change with the ‘solutions’ offered, since different reasons for change lead to different sites of, and strategies for, change” (Thomson, 2010, p. 13).

Social innovations are a result of a social need or are aimed at resolving a social concern (Fullan, 2001b). Nussbaumer and Moulaert (as cited in Fullan, 2001b) believe that a social innovation “helps to improve the situation for underprivileged groups in society” (p. 285). Fullan views social innovation as a process that meets social needs better than former alternatives, changes social practices common to the organization, empowers the ability of stakeholders to act for self and society, and ultimately results in the social capital of the individual increasing and thereby increasing one’s social performance.

The change process, specifically in relation to performance, is not an easy endeavor. It is much easier to change policy, but performance change is complex (Elmore, 2004). To fully examine institutional change, the researcher must examine how the institutional culture and systems both support and inhibit leadership from instituting lasting change. Cultures and structures have the ability to promote development or to constrain it (Hauge et al., 2014; Leo & Wickenberg, 2013). While Thomson (2010) argues that there is no single formula that will ensure change, but rather there are common factors and conditions that promote change as being fulfilled and sustained. Change requires action from both actors within the school and from individuals outside the organization. Those schools that have thought through the process and desired outcomes for change, that have a stable school staff, and that are given the flexibility, time, and autonomy to change, are more likely to see change succeed. In addition, those

in the organization partaking in change need tools and resources for supporting change and meeting goals in order to execute the desired improvement (Hauge et al., 2014). Blood and Thorsborne (2005) promote that continual development and dialogue for leaders require continual influence. Nonetheless, influence cannot be restricted to a single leader. Leaders employ resources available to them—other leaders, training, dialogue with peers—to continue to provide influence toward fulfilling vision. Morrison et al. (2005) cite change as a resource-intensive endeavor. Provision of resources is a symbol of a leader's commitment to organizational change.

While there are conditions that improve the likelihood of success, there are barriers to success. A school can make a huge investment, but due to inappropriate conditions, change may not take hold. Gordon and Patterson (2008) witnessed the mantra of *it's what we've always been doing*, in their studies, observing major stakeholders in the change process using change as a way to legitimize current culture rather than to change culture. In an ironic twist, change initiatives are used by organizational members to legitimate current practice, thereby reinforcing the current culture and making change an almost impossible endeavour. Elmore (2004) stresses that change must occur culture-wide. Useful change must enhance the conditions under which teachers teach and students learn. Specifically, in schools, both policy and practice must be addressed in change. A change in policy without investing in teachers to reform their pedagogy will ultimately have little to no impact on student performance.

School leadership has a critical role in ensuring the likelihood of school change taking hold (Hauge et al., 2014). However, the role of the leader is not that of one who takes the entire process on her or his shoulders, for change that is instituted by a single

individual will not end up impacting the entire culture. The role of the leader is to distribute the projects, processes, and tasks amongst the major stakeholders in the school including other administrators, teachers, students, and parents (Spillane, 2005; Thomson, 2010). Hauge et al. (2014) stress that individuals in a school must be entrusted with leadership throughout the school. Department heads, teachers, and students all have a role to play in moving a school forward. Failing to trust them in the process through a lack of opportunities for leading will ultimately disable these individuals from taking part in school improvement. Crouch (2013) advocates for the sum–power relationship, whereby power is not lost by the leader by giving up power, but rather power is created when leadership is distributed. Simply giving power over is not a simple task, for change is embedded with differing values amongst all stakeholders. Leo and Wickenberg (2013) advocate that principals first develop their own value-based concept of the pending change, while managing conflicting values that will occur throughout the process. They observed that common norms throughout the school are likely to be established when principals, teachers, and students uphold coexpectations from each other and policy. Harris (as cited in Hauge et al., 2014) advocates for the redevelopment of leadership roles, such that the traditional administration, teacher, student hierarchy is replaced by creating teams whereby roles and responsibilities allocate leadership more broadly across the school. Nonetheless, more research is needed on comprehensive leadership approaches such as these, for they are seldom described in literature (Hauge et al., 2014).

Kotter (2009) speaks to eight reasons that change endeavours do not succeed:

1. A lack of urgency among the organization is cited as a reason for failing to change. A strategy is to convince leaders and followers alike that maintaining

the status quo is more dangerous than taking on a change initiative.

2. Change initiatives require a guiding coalition that takes ownership of the change. Change initiatives started by only the senior administrator or by too small of a group will not succeed.
3. Change requires a vision, a picture of what the future might look like. The vision directs not only what change will look like, but also the process for getting there.
4. Communicating the vision is crucial for change initiatives, and the vision needs to be broadcast clearly and often. If organizational members do not know where you are going, you cannot take them there.
5. Obstacles to the vision need to be eliminated, for systemic, personal, or cultural obstacles can grind change efforts to a halt.
6. Administration needs to celebrate and create short-term victories.

Organizational members need to see the vision working, recognize that goals are achieved, and be rewarded with recognition or by other means.
7. Change can be declared too quickly, for short-term victories are not equivalent to full change, and premature victory causes loss of urgency and vision.
8. Changes have to be anchored in the culture of the organization such that the changes become cultural norms: no one knows any different. This means being deliberate in helping the organization to see where change has occurred and how it is benefiting the organization. The change also needs to be personified in new management.

These eight factors demonstrate the complexity and the delicateness of change

endeavours. To be successful, a vision change must be well thought out by administration, and then the vision needs to be executed day by day. School change can be cumbersome and can require a large investment of time. Some changes can appear to take hold, yet ultimately fade away, leaving the organization back where it was (Thomson, 2010). Failed change endeavours may also discourage leadership from undertaking other changes, believing that the process may be futile. Change is not a linear process. Thomson (2010) speaks to the pace of change, ensuring it is not too fast and not too slow; there is a happy medium in which change flourishes. The outcome of change processes is also difficult to anticipate, for there are numerous social factors that can influence the process, and as these factors come into play, the process and thereby the ultimate outcome of the change initiative—the desire for a new culture—is also impacted (Loogma, Tafel-Viia, & Ümarik, 2013).

Kouzes and Posner (as cited in Blood & Thorsborne, 2005) suggest five actions to be undertaken by leadership that change an environment from one that exists in status quo to one that engages in dynamic change: *challenging processes*, *inspiring a shared vision*, *enabling others to be active* in the vision, *modeling* how to fulfill vision, and *encouraging the heart* of others. Blood and Thorsborne employ these principles for framing restorative change. It is one thing to initiate change, but another thing to sustain it. Leaders must continually engage in challenging, inspiring, sharing vision, enabling, and encouraging, for people always need to be influenced through relationships in order to continually shape behaviours and beliefs. An organization that engages in dynamic change is always undertaking new change in order to avoid status quo: The organization is always learning. This is true when schools undertake restorative change; leadership

must lead the school community in the change or the implemented change will die (Reimer, 2011). The language and actions of leadership convey messages to the school community, for every interaction speaks to what is important in the school and to what is not important (Morrison et al., 2005). Shaw (2007) suggests that leading restorative change is most effective when change is integrated into existing pedagogies and programs for change cannot stand alone as a unique entity. While leadership can change culture, change happens within existing structures.

Without relationships, a restorative leader has little upon which to challenge, inspire, share vision, enable, and encourage. Restorative leaders are always working to invest in relationships by building up relationships rather than breaking them down (Hopkins, 2012). The investment of restorative leaders must be done in a restorative way. Therefore, leaders need to ensure that they are comfortable with the philosophy, theory, and exercise of restorative practices (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). In this way, restorative approaches including dialogue, story-telling, and circles can be modeled by leadership and applied to enable members of the community—teachers, support staff, and students—to experience relational restorative approaches. This experience is integral for educators, for it provides a model for educators as they seek to implement restorative approaches amongst students and their colleagues.

Freire (2000) names that actions taken to make change must be systematic and deliberate, for actions by leaders meant to impact culture can either serve a culture of domination or can establish a culture of freedom for members of the community. Cultures of power, oppression, and domination must be named and countered in order for all members of the community to flourish.

Power and Critical Theory

Freire (2000) states that few human interactions are void of power indifferences. These power indifferences can lead to different forms of oppression. Torres (2014) names that critical social theory “plays a major role in configuring schooling and social reproduction” (p. 113). Ellsworth (1989) urges educators to examine the underlying assumptions and power dynamics within a school, for if left unaddressed pedagogies of power will continue to dominate students in classrooms. Examining the power structures within a school brings scrutiny to the existing rule-based and managerial structures in a school (Vaandering, 2010). McCluskey et al. (2011) articulate the reluctance of educators to give up power, for punishment done *to* students is still seen as a natural and reasonable symbol of a teacher’s strength in a school. As a result, the implementation of restorative approaches can introduce both a solution and a risk (McCluskey et al., 2011; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). While some educators desire to uphold the needs of students, they may also fear changing the structures they know and teach under. Yet when educators use their power to do something *to* students, the reaction of students is to do something *to* teachers in return. Students will find power where they can through back-talking, disobeying rules, seeking loopholes in policy, or using excuses that force the educator into making difficult discretionary decisions (Webb, 2009). When educators desire to work *with* students, investing relationally, teaching and upholding values, and demonstrating genuine care for their character, then students are more apt to work with the educators.

Power and Restorative Practices.

Vaandering (2010) employed critical theory to enhance philosophical understanding of restorative practices highlighting, “while RJ addresses issues of conflict and behaviour it cannot be understood solely in these terms if it is going to play a role in transforming the culture of schooling” (pp. 145–146). She articulates that the study of power and critical theory in relation to restorative justice is an underdeveloped field that requires further investigation. Vaandering believes that the study of restorative practices in the context of power structures opens the door for restorative approaches to take hold in schools by addressing where “relationship is emphasized over decontextualized individual behaviour” (p. 173). Nonetheless, Vaandering states that her work is only the beginning of understanding how the study of critical theory and power structures can contribute to the study of restorative practices in education. To examine power-based structures and relational approaches, I will delve into literature on the restorative *social-discipline window* proposed by Wachtel and McCold (2004), examining how power structures impact relationships and dialogue in the building of a restorative culture.

Uhl-Bien & Ospina (2012) posit that studies in leadership are often explored with a critical lens, examining the power asymmetries that exist within organizations. From a constructionist perspective of leadership, it is crucial that one examines how power influences organizations. In speaking of restorative justice (RJ) and critical theory, Vaandering states, “In order for RJ to be effective and sustainable it must be understood first and foremost through a critical lens that recognizes the systemic, institutional, and structural dimensions of power relations in school communities” (p. 151). Vaandering further argues for the need to examine restorative practices through power structures

using critical theory, for an educator's belief in power reflects his or her view of the student–educator relationship. Uhl-Bien and Ospina stress the need to scrutinize the so-called *natural* structures that are presented as reality, identifying that oppressive relationships might be ingrained within the *natural* system. While the systems may be endemic, this does not mean they are natural. They stress that in examining power, oppression must be recognized as arising out of social derivations rather than natural origins. Vaandering pushes for the need for research in the domain of restorative practices in critical theory in order that restorative research is not restricted to student conduct but rather focuses on investing in and sustaining relationships.

Vaandering (2013) states, “RJ principles, which presume a view of human beings as relational, are particularly difficult to embody in a school context where adults are used to being in power” (p. 299). A *power over* philosophy and relational practices like those embodied by RJ cannot work together, for the with-ness required to build relationships lacks the inherent values for moving forward. Every decision that an educator makes is a discretionary decision embedded with power; the question is whether power is used over students or with students (Webb, 2009). Freire (2000) builds this argument in expressing that educators cannot initiate human interactions in treating students as objects if they desire for students to become human beings. Power must be shared with students throughout the learning process.

When things become difficult in a school employing restorative practices because educators feel that students are taking advantage of situations, it is very easy to blame the restorative approach. Educators can fall back on—or default to—punishment as a remedy, believing that students will change if the school employs more fear and provides

less opportunity for students to create conflict. In this paradigm, justice is provided only to those students who fall within the expectations: the moral scope of the educator (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Those outside this moral compass are punished in order that they will comply with the educator's expectations. Some equate this compliance with respect. Under this viewpoint, a compliant class is a *good* class and a rule-abiding student is a *good* student. Others do not see complying with extrinsic demands as comparable to intrinsically respecting an individual. Braithwaite (as cited in Macready, 2009) describes it in this way:

In line with common-sense thinking, Braithwaite (1989) proposes that the reason most people behave responsibly is their wish to avoid the justifiable resentment and disappointment of those people who matter most to them – their family, friends, or revered members of their community. However, socially irresponsible attitudes are fostered when individuals experience censure and punishment from people who do not matter to them. When this occurs, distancing in social relationships can lead to a negative cycle in which individuals seek solace and encouragement from those who share similar positions and attitudes. (Macready, 2009, p. 212)

As described in Macready (2009) by Braithwaite, punishment does not serve to uphold an educator's power in the way people who espouse this philosophy might think. In fact, it achieves the opposite by negating an educator's power for positive change; students do not work with educators who employ punitive means of seeking compliance. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) state, "Rather than focusing on external sanctioning systems (rewards and punishment) as a motivational lever, RJ focuses on the motivational lever of

relational ecologies, embedded in the value base of internal sanctioning systems” (p. 140). However, a system void of formal sanctions can make teachers feel insecure (Cremin, 2014). It is easier for some educators to find comfort in the power of a discipline policy rather than relying on relationships for transforming students.

The social discipline window. Wachtel (1999) speaks to a system of education that involves *high support* and *high control*. The power relationships revealed through the interaction between these two variables is articulated in Wachtel’s *social discipline window* (see Figure 1). The model proposes that a restorative environment exists when one upholds high control and high support for another. This is generally thought of in terms of the student–teacher relationship, but it can be associated with any relationships in a school. High control is established through a disciplined learning environment sustaining high expectations. High support encourages and nurtures students and teachers. When students and educators receive high support and low control, leadership is doing education *for* students and educators. In the *for* paradigm, leadership is moving people through the process but has not created an environment whereby educators and students take responsibility for their own behaviour and that of others: Individuals are enabled rather than empowered. When individuals work with high control and low support, education is done *to* others. In this case, individuals provide high expectations for learning, but there is little in the way of teaching, leading, or mentoring to move people towards who they can become: Individuals are powered over rather than empowered. High support and high control is the relational restorative quadrant whereby individuals work *with* each other, working in cooperation and supporting each other in the learning process. Freire (2000) describes authentic education as that which engages

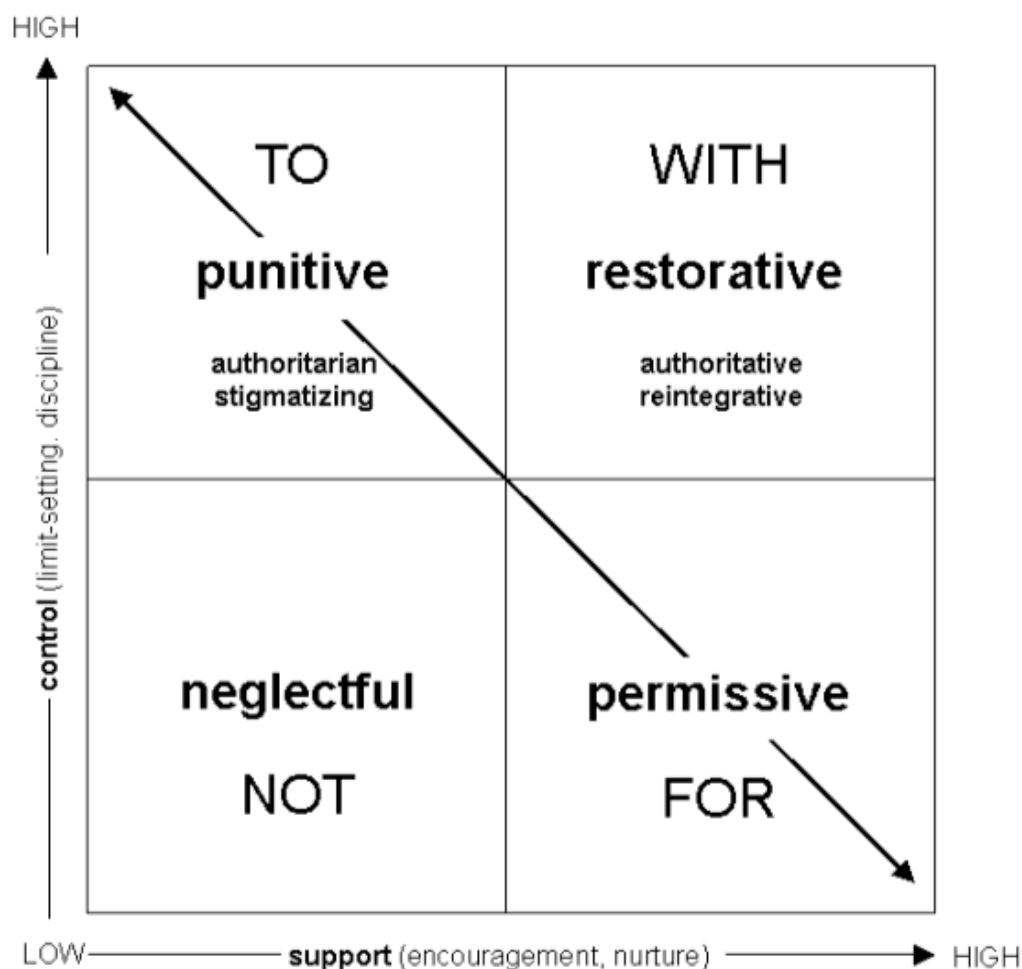


Figure 1. Social discipline window.

Note. From “Restorative Justice in Everyday Life: Beyond the Formal Ritual,” by T. Wachtel, 1999. Paper presented at the “Reshaping Australian Institutions Conference: Restorative Justice and Civil Society,” The Australian National University, Canberra, February 16–18, 1999. Copyright 1999 by Ted Wachtel. The article can be retrieved at <http://www.iirp.org/library/anu.html>. Reprinted with permission.

one *with* another. hooks (2003) adds that in working relationally *with* students through a mutual partnership, educators are able to humanize the learning process.

Vaandering (2010) stresses the need to examine the social discipline window from both a relational and a critical approach, for relationships cannot be divorced from context. To understand the nature of power in school relationships, starting with the student-teacher relationship requires an examination of the social and political factors impacting the context.

Freire (2000) challenges the entire notion of the student–educator relationship. While traditionally this model would be viewed as a hierarchical relationship, Freire states that to work *with* students, educators must be willing to empower students. He states, “education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students” (p. 72). Freire upholds that true change and transformation do not happen by the leader doing it for her/his followers but rather by the leader being involved in transformation with her/his followers. Educators who not only teach students but who are also willing to be taught by students create a relationship whereby everyone in the classroom takes ownership for her/his own learning and the learning of others. Power is shared rather than controlled, establishing the foundation for positive change to occur.

Literature of Restoration

The body of literature related to restoration has grown over the past decade. As a study of restoration, the following literature speaks to this literature and how key areas of this case study are framed by restorative-specific research. The section includes social

capital, restoration and empowerment, restorative pedagogies, and the practices of restorative practices.

Social Capital

Restorative literature makes frequent reference to social capital as a positive outcome of restorative approaches. Social capital theory is integral for understanding a framework of restoration. Wachtel (2012) upholds restorative practices as a social science concerned with building social capital through empowering others by giving them ownership in learning and decision-making. Nonetheless, definitions of social capital are diverse. Liou and Chang (2008) view social capital theory from a relational perspective, defining social capital as, “resources embedded in individual relationships” (p. 103). Lin (2001) states that “social capital is the resources, real or potential, gained from relationships” (p. 23). Penuel, Riel, Krause, and Frank (2009) add that social ties provide access to resources, but it is also incumbent upon an individual to make use of resources in order to initiate change. Embedded in relationships and social ties, social capital comes to fruition through networks and groups. van der Gaag and Snijders (2004) view social capital as the pool of resources that belong to all the individuals in one’s personal social network. Bourdieu (2001) ties this together, viewing social capital as the sum of actual and probable resources that exist within one’s relational network. As a result, Bourdieu conjectures that one’s total volume of social capital will be contingent on the size of the network one is able to assemble. Lin proposes four reasons why resources embedded in one’s social capital can be engaged for action and change through social networks. First, social capital enables the flow of *information* amongst individuals. Second, social connections can be *influential*, exerting power on decision-making. Third, social ties can

serve as *social credentials*, opening doors to more resources. Finally, one's social connections serve as *reinforcements*, defending the actions of individuals and upholding one's entitlement to resources. Social capital requires sacrifice on the part of group members in order that the social group can work together (Cloete, 2014). Likewise, membership in a social group comes with obligations, fulfilling responsibilities to other group members including the sharing of resources (Lin, 2001). Nonetheless, it is the profits that come from social solidarity that facilitate the permanency of groups (Bourdieu, 2001). Furthermore, Bourdieu claims that those who build social capital become known, and thereby are sought by others. As a result, because those who are well known are considered worthy of being known, then their high social capital naturally creates more social capital.

Relationships are the medium in which social capital is conceived and grows. Without relationships, social capital fails to exist, for it is through relationships that networks are developed and resources are shared. Liou and Chang (2008) have found that when viewing education through a social capital lens, programs for learning become effective when students and school staff invest in long-term relations. Morrison et al. (2005) emphasize the need for relations in stating, "if we understand that individuals are also motivated by the need for affirming social relationships (or to simply find meaning for themselves as group members), institutions should acknowledge and carry the responsibility of nurturing positive relationships" (p. 337). They believe that restorative practices are a philosophy that emphasizes and upholds the value of relationships in schools and for learning. Furthermore, they maintain that failing to invest in social capital is a failure in developing and nurturing students to be active and responsible citizens.

Croninger and Lee (2001) emphasize that social capital in a classroom starts with the student–teacher relationship. Teachers serve as a model for how to be in relation and how to share resources. Teachers cannot expect to lead student–student relations in the development of social capital if the teacher–student model is ineffective.

What characterizes a learning environment that is high in social capital? Out of the obligation to mutually exchange resources, one might experience trust, fairness, and fulfillment of obligations thereby exuding social cohesion (Cloete, 2014; van der Gaag & Snijders, 2004) Putnam (2001) depicts the many faces of social capital. It can develop in a formal environment such as a classroom, though it may also develop in a less formal environment like a playground. Some networks can be very interlaced as in an ethnic or a religious community. Others may be thin and unstable, yet continue to exist. Putnam believes that social capital benefits those in the network, but he also believes that private networks have the ability to benefit individuals outside of the group, whether in another network or in the greater public. Putnam explains this distinction in social capital as *bonding* and *bridging*. Huang, Braithwaite, Tsutomi, Hosoi, and Braithwaite (2012) describe bonding as occurring inside of groups, whereby the group finds commonality in its norms and values and as result, individuals are loyal to their social network. The loyalty may be such that the group becomes exclusive, barring others from being a part of the network. Bridging describes connections that occur across groups or networks, specifically groups that are unrelated or that do not associate. Cloete (2014) believes that the strength of a bonded network enables the network to bridge social capital to other groups or even to greater society.

While social capital presents tremendous benefits, it also presents challenges and

uncertainties. First off is that there is no guarantee that one's social capital will result in the creation of more relations (Cloete, 2014). Furthermore, not all relationships are positive. Influential social capital can occur in many places, not simply a classroom. Capital can be attained from families, fellow employees, or sometimes from others we know but have little connection with (van der Gaag & Snijders, 2004). Individuals may build social capital and the trust and values that exist in that capital, but capital and networks can be used negatively, even for purposes of destruction (Putnam, 2001). Individual differences highly impact capital. Some people do not like asking for help or they like to remain self-sufficient. Consequently, these individuals do not mobilize the network resources available (van der Gaag & Snijders, 2004). Social capital also relies on trustworthiness amongst individuals in the group. An individual's needs, goals, and available resources will impact the networks one invests in, for not all capital benefits each individual. In the same vein, not all resources may be available in each school or organization to meet the needs of the individual. As a result, if one does not recognize the benefits of the relational network, he or she may not invest. At the same time, one may require the leading of another to recognize the benefits available. Finally, Portes (2000) questions whether some invest in networks and relationships purely for the benefits that will result. This relationship may be void of the trust and values inherent in a positive relationship. This emphasizes the need for leadership to continue to invest in relations, upholding the values and producing the capital that they believe are essential for developing individuals as learners and as individuals. Vaandering (2009) calls for further research into building school cultures that invest in and restore relationships.

Empowerment and Restoration

No leader can sustain change on her/his own. When one seeks to change things alone there will not be sustained change. To seek to do things alone means that change is not sought through relationships: without relationships, there is no influence. It is essential for a restorative school to include the school community, for if restorative approaches are restricted to a school administrator's office, then the rest of the school community does not experience the change, and hence, there are no stories or experiences upon which to advocate for restorative approaches (Reimer, 2011). Umbreit et al. (2007) view the dialogic process as a restorative process of empowerment. Empowerment is the act of leading and encouraging everyone in the school community—educators, staff, students, and parents—to engage in making learning happen every day (Hopkins, 2012). Through being empowered, school community members take ownership of the school and of the learning process. Thus, the entire community, through relationships, seeks to challenge, inspire, share vision, enable, and encourage. Morrison et al. (2005) believe that leadership is reciprocal; leadership leads to empowerment, and empowerment leads to leadership, and the outcome is positive change!

Schools underestimate the power of students to have a positive impact on changing a school culture. Students, as the largest community in a school and the primary stakeholders in learning, have both gifts and abilities to contribute in terms of leading a school. Yet, Shaw (2007) states, “the participation and role of students and parents in any whole-school change are important but are currently less well developed” (p. 133). Roher (2008) pushes school leadership to empower students in order to provide opportunities for leadership and growth. Students can serve as mentors, mediators, peers supporters,

and in numerous other opportunities in schools (Hopkins, 2012; Roher, 2008). Again, this must be modeled from school administration, demonstrating that school leadership entrusts students to be active in leadership positions (Roher, 2008). The title of leader cannot be a token position, for students recognize when a title is not genuine. Enabling student leadership means giving up some control in order that students may be free to engage with the empowerment provided to them.

Restorative Pedagogies

In an effort to ensure that restorative practices are integrated into the entire school culture, it has become evident that restorative approaches must be utilized in the classroom environment (Bickmore, 2011; Hopkins, 2012, Vaandering, 2014a, 2014b). At the classroom level, restorative approaches have the potential to impact an entire student body, whereas restorative approaches restricted to discipline and responses to conflict directly affect a smaller percentage of students in a school. Vaandering (2014a) identifies restorative pedagogies as upholding student well-being and student connectedness through positive classroom relationships. Restorative pedagogies uphold the need for dialogue and peace-building in the classroom for enhancing students' learning experiences. Bickmore (2011) advocates going beyond peace-making strategies to peace-building strategies, whereby pedagogy addresses injustice, upholds democracy, and builds positive social relations. Vaandering (2009, 2014b) stresses that restorative pedagogies are necessary in all aspects of schooling: in formal and informal settings; in offices, classrooms, and hallways; and in the design of the classroom and the school to establish places conducive to dialogue.

While initially the impact of relational proactive pedagogies may be a reduction of occurrences of conflict, in the long run, restorative pedagogies can support culture change in a school, establishing fundamental school values at the classroom level (Hopkins, 2012). Vaandering (2014a) observed that engaged pedagogies establish relational classrooms. These classrooms empower students as decision makers and uphold each student as a worthy person. In taking the focus away from conflict and management, restorative pedagogies reinforce the value of teaching and learning (Vaandering, 2014a). Pedagogies that enable schools to get to the core of their being—that being learning—benefit students and society.

Krzesni (2014) stresses that restorative pedagogy, in empowering students, enables students to follow their own passions and their own vision for their lives rather than a vision established through only a teacher's perspective. Hopkins (2012) sees tremendous value in classroom environments that stress dialogue, enabling students to share ideas, views, and opinions. She desires to see a classroom where students and teachers have an open mind: to be open in what they say and to be open to what they hear. Hopkins believes that if one were to use a restorative pedagogy every day, students would have a change in mindset or a change in “‘a heart set’ since a restorative mindset draws on heart-felt beliefs” (p. 123). Ultimately, she sees restorative pedagogy establishing a *culture of care*. While there is some writing on restorative pedagogies, Vaandering (2014a) reveals that there are few empirical studies examining the phenomenon of restorative pedagogies. She urges for more research to strengthen the restorative pedagogy dialogue.

The Practices of Restorative Practices

Umbreit et al. (2007) and Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2010) express that dialogic means are the mostly employed expressions of restorative practices. They observe dialogue to be enacted through dialogic tools: impromptu conferences, circles, and formal group conferencing. Vaandering (2014b) stresses that formal and informal interactions amongst all members of the school community are grounded in viewing all people as relational and worthy.

Impromptu conferences. Conflict is inevitable when people exist in community, for relationships are always vulnerable to being broken. The restorative leader ensures that responses to conflict involve restoring relationships. Costello et al. (2009) believe that leaders responding to conflict need to utilize meetings that involve the community, ensuring that decisions are not solely in the hands of a single individual. They encourage leaders to provide opportunities for those who have caused harm to repair the harm. Costello et al. (2010) state that impromptu conferences occur when individuals come together briefly to address conflict. Affective questions are used to facilitate dialogue. Costello et al. (2009) name five affective questions that can be employed when responding to situations involving conflict. These are often known as the *restorative questions*:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way have they been affected?

5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Circles. Costello et al. (2010) speak to circles as a “formal restorative process” (p. 13). They suggest that circles enable members of school communities to answer questions, provide feedback, open discussions, or to brainstorm. Costello et al. name that circles can be proactive (community building) or reactive (responding to conflict). Circles may focus on academic and/or personal themes. Pranis (2005) stresses that circles provide a place where each participant is respected, where each person has a chance to speak, and where everyone is on an equal playing field.

Formal Conferencing. Costello et al. (2010) uphold formal conferences as the most structured dialogic process involved with restorative practices. Conferences are used to respond to conflict, whereby everyone involved has a voice, is able to express feelings, and can contribute to the outcome. Conferences are designed to be democratic, whereby those most impacted by conflict are able to have a voice in regard to making things right. A facilitator brings people together, establishes a safe environment, and records the decisions made by the group. Facilitators guide the proceedings while seeking to facilitate dialogue between the people in the conference circle. A script is used to guide both the questions, and who will speak when, in order to address the wrongdoings and to repair harms that resulted from the conflict (O’Connell, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 1999).

Safety and Progressive Discipline

Restorative practices seek to establish a foundation for cultivating a safe learning environment. Specifically, Macready (2009) believes that restorative practices enable practitioners to examine how a climate can be developed that respects all individuals in the school community and addresses how the school can respond to harmful behaviour.

Morrison and Vaandering (2012) state that restorative practices as a philosophy are effective for upholding just schools. Restorative approaches uphold the importance of relationships and how people in general flourish through positive social engagement rather than in an environment of controlled behaviour. The Ontario Ministry of Education's document, *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario* (2010a), stresses this same idea, expressing that individuals are more productive and cooperative when in *relation*, working with others toward achieving positive change. In instances of conflict, a restorative philosophy aims to restore relationships that have been broken, providing victims and offenders a safe place to make amends and to renew relations. In a restorative paradigm the offender is empowered to make decisions regarding her/his actions as opposed to solely having decisions imposed on her/him (Drewery, 2007). Ultimately the relational restorative culture should impact all school outcomes including learning, safety, and the overall climate of the school (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

The Ontario Ministry of Education's policy, *Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour*, defines school climate as "the learning environment and relationships found within a school and school community" (2012, p. 2). The policy adds that a positive climate is fundamental for reducing inappropriate behaviour. The positive climate upholds respect, inclusivity, and equity. In this culture, everyone in the school feels safe, feels like they are a part of the community, and seeks to better the community each day. The *Caring and Safe Schools* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a) document pushes for schools to teach students skills that will enable students to make positive choices in regard to their behaviour.

In the Ontario Ministry of Education's, *Progressive Discipline and Promoting*

Positive Student Behaviour (2012), progressive discipline is defined as “a whole-school approach that utilizes a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote and foster positive behaviours” (p. 3). Progressive discipline seeks to remove purely punitive responses to misbehaviour and replace them with processes that seek to support students through strategies that ultimately aim to have them return to the school community.

Aspects of restorative culture reveal the impact restorative practices have on school relationships, student safety, and student learning. Hopkins (2012) states it is clear that conflict and pain can be reduced through developing and applying proactive skills. She believes that restorative encounters uncover compassion, empathy, and accountability in students. Mirsky (2007) suggests that when students can seek support and provide support, a sense of safety is strengthened within the community. In a study by Mirsky, she observed that students in a restorative environment reported conflict more frequently, for they trusted that the conflict would be addressed. Ultimately, when the attitude and character of individuals start to change, school culture starts to change, for culture reflects its people. Schools need to consider age-appropriate structures that enable educators to lead students toward making positive change.

Ultimately, progressive discipline legislation (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012) seeks to develop school environments that uphold safety and inclusivity, experienced by individuals in classes, families, and in the greater community. Safe and caring school climates are established through both curriculum and policies, but curriculum and policy are delivered and upheld by people. Structures are only as strong

as the individuals who espouse them. Recognizing that when people are involved there will be conflict that needs to be addressed, schools need to continually examine and evaluate the strategies and programs they have established for assessing how the school is addressing issues, “including racism, intolerance based on religion or disability, bullying, homophobia, and gender-based violence” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 3). The *Caring and Safe Schools* document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a) stresses the need for leaders to collect data regarding how the school community—students, staff, parents, and the greater community—experience school culture in order to assess the strengths of school strategies and examine how procedures can be improved.

While legislation and policy from both the *Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012) and the *Caring and Safe Schools* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a) documents are meant to serve the best-interests of students, many barriers must be overcome for these documents to meet the needs of the students and the greater school community. Bickmore (2011) stresses that schools, in an attempt to be more efficient in creating a safe school environment, may divert more energy toward peacekeeping measures that restrict students, specifically vulnerable students. This is at the cost of an environment that stresses dialogue and relational investment. While this approach may feel like it protects students, Bickmore stresses that ultimately this reinforces social hierarchies and inhibits the formation of positive relationships. Likewise, McCluskey et al. (2011) states that a restorative relational approach challenges systemic norms in schools where concerns for safety are currently addressed by containing danger and risk, rather than addressing conflict and misbehavior in a climate of trust and justice. In contrast to relational approaches and open

dialogue, those in schools who are embedded in traditional systemic norms can see openness as a threat, and thereby fall back on punishment and control to change culture. This ambiguous dichotomy of punishment and trust needs to be resolved for restorative approaches to take hold, for a restorative culture cannot be developed when students experience conflicting messages (Webb, 2009).

Bickmore (2011) points out that while the *Caring and Safe Schools* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010a) document speaks to *what* needs to happen for safe schools and *why* safe schools are crucial for our children, the report fails to address *who* is responsible for carrying out change and how they might go about this. Bickmore looks specifically at how curriculum and teaching could be employed for teaching students about conflict resolution. She would also like to see greater emphasis on how processes could be developed to uphold the voice of stakeholders, avoid a dialogue of blame, and work toward effective problem solving. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) stress the need for more research in restorative praxis, examining both processes and outcomes of restorative approaches at macro- and microlevels to continue to develop an understanding of effective restorative processes that enable everyone in learning communities to flourish.

In this chapter, I reviewed relevant literature regarding restorative practices and leading to instill restorative culture change in an educational setting. Building on the conceptual framework, the chapter explored relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006) and dialogue (Barrett, 2013; Buber, 1923/1970). Buber's conceptualization of I–Thou informed me of the importance of assessing how people view others when entering dialogue and relation.

The chapter examined leadership theory as it pertains to relational leadership and restorative culture change. Hopkins (2012) upholds that relationships provide the foundation required for restorative culture change, enabling leaders to enable, challenge, and inspire followers. Blackmore (2013) notes that though leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, they each have a different emphasis regarding educational governance. While Blackmore suggests that new leadership styles—including her work with feminist critical leadership—come about as a response to the failure of previous leadership theories, aspects of these leadership theories have helped to shape current theory around relational and restorative leadership. Servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) focuses on the leader meeting individual needs. Literature on transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) reveals the importance of leading followers to be intrinsically motivated, thereby creating two-way leadership within the organization. Transformative leadership (Shields, 2010) focuses on the importance of social context and how social structures dictate the culture within an organization. Finally, distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005) recognizes that multiple members of a school serve as leaders and that leadership takes place through social interactions, thereby shaping the school culture. The relational attributes of these leadership styles provide the groundwork for conducting and analyzing research around relational leadership as it pertains to restorative practices.

The literature review expounded on change literature (Elmore, 2004; Hauge et al., 2014; Thomson, 2010) and organizational culture literature (Fullan, 2006; Schein, 2004) establishing a foundation for researching the leading of a change in culture. Using Wachtel's (1999) social discipline window, the review examined the role of power in

restorative practices (Vaandering, 2010). Literature specific to restorative practices was studied, revealing themes including restorative culture (Macready, 2009), restorative change (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005), social capital (Liou & Chang, 2008), restorative leadership and responses to conflict (Costello et al., 2009), and restorative pedagogy (Bickmore, 2011, Hopkins, 2012, Vaandering, 2014a). Finally, the chapter spoke to the policy of the Ontario Ministry of Education and how progressive discipline legislation (2012) seeks to provide safe and equitable environments such that all members of the school community can thrive in a learning environment. The literature review establishes the foundation for developing a case study for examining the leading of restorative culture change in a school.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

“Relationality argues that a topic's felt meaningfulness to the researcher is a value to be enacted rather than a problem to be overcome in one's research design” (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000, p. 560). When studying relationships in an organizational context, Bradbury and Lichtenstein speak to a methodology that upholds a *relationality orientation*. Uhl-Bien (2006) stresses that when studying leadership from a relational perspective, the researcher cannot focus solely on individual attributes, for leadership is relational and must be established in a relational context. Uhl-Bien, working with literature from Bouwen and Hosking (2000), proposes that relational research needs to include a relational social constructionist perspective rather than solely a constructivist perspective. Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012) state that constructionists emphasize the study of *culture* rather than the focus on the experiences of individuals. The social constructionist perspective views dialogic and other communicative processes as “the vehicle in which self and world are in ongoing construction” (Bouwen & Hosking, 2000, p. 268). Buber (1923/1970) and Bradbury and Lichtenstein refer to the need to study the *space between*, the area where two or more individuals evolve together, accounting for the interspace of relations rather than restricting research to persons as independent entities. Uhl-Bien emphasizes that a relational ontology changes the way the researcher frames questions for research. In a relationality orientation, questions examine how processes emerge from leadership and how knowledge, decisions, and actions are rooted in collective practices in order to continually regenerate organizational culture.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) state that in a relational ontology:

Organizations are not understood as structures and systems but communities of

people and conversations. And in contrast to the focus on process and mechanisms found in other relational perspectives, a relational leader sees people not as objects to be manipulated but as human beings-in-relation with themselves. (p. 1431)

From a social constructionist perspective, relational research in leadership seeks to understand the organizational context of a school at the macrolevel, which is developed through relational interactions at the microlevel. It is at the microlevel where leadership is fundamentally relational, forming the foundation for the macrolevel culture of the school (Fletcher, 2012). The researcher who studies from a relational ontology seeks to reveal the interactive contexts where leadership comes to life. Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012) highlight that “the researcher aims to uncover constructed realities, revealing the meaning of experience, rather than accessing reality itself” (p. 24).

As stated previously, Fullan (2006) posits that change is a product of examining the change in individuals and examining the change in culture, or the shared assumptions of the group established internally and externally as a result of change processes and considered to be valid amongst the group (Schein, 2004). This is congruent with relational leadership theory that seeks to uphold both the entitative end of the paradigm and the social constructionist end of the paradigm. Relational leadership theory allows one to go beyond the type of relationship or the qualities of a relationship and to deepen the examination of relationships by looking at relational processes that leadership uses to establish and evolve relationships across the organization (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

To study the change processes at both the objective and intersubjective ends of RLT, a *case study* was employed. The case study seeks to establish a holistic view of the

organization over a defined time period, using multiple methods to attain information in order to triangulate the researched evidence to create a genuine and truthful picture of the restorative culture change process experienced by the school community. The study seeks to examine the qualities of relationship, the process of relating, and the dialogic processes employed both in the culture and in the research methods, in order to better understand what it means to lead, to establish and sustain a restorative culture.

Philosophical Stance

Tsang (2014) explains that interpretivism is a philosophical stance that views social reality as being constructed by individuals. In being constructed by individuals, the meaning is subjective for each person, and thereby multiple realities are possible. In terms of an epistemological stance, knowledge is created through the research by interpreting the actions and responses of the participants according to the context they find themselves in. Tsang upholds that interpretive research is commonly done using case studies or ethnographies. Specifically, as research that upholds relational perspectives, this research will uphold the philosophical perspective of interpretivism, recognizing the social constructionist view of the research, as participants share their meaning as it relates to their interactions with others.

In case study research, Simons (2009) views interpretivism as appropriate when the researcher is examining pluralistic views that arise out of varied understandings and experiences. In terms of audience, an interpretivist view is relevant for organizational leadership, all participants, and the social science community. It is best pursued as qualitative research, employing open-ended interviews, observations, and documents to

establish a rich and holistic case. To this end, the foundations for a case study methodology, and the methods to be employed in this case, will be expounded upon.

Case Studies

“Case studies are widely used in organizational studies and across the social sciences” (Klenke, 2008, p. 58). Case studies in the field of leadership focus on change, as case studies typically examine changes over time in an organization in relation to the specific phenomenon being studied. The researcher is thereby able to establish a holistic view around characteristics and events related to leadership processes (Klenke, 2008). This upholds the case study as an effective method for addressing the research questions in this study. Research question #1 asks, “What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture?” MacDonald and Walker (1975) describe case studies as being bounded by time and circumstances, revealing truths and human experience. In informing readers about how participants understand and create their world, the case study provides the researcher with the opportunity to recognize her/his perspective, and how this contributes to interpretation of the phenomenon (Simons, 2009). This aspect of case studies makes it an effective method for answering research question #2, “How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community?” Finally, Simons (2009) describes the qualitative case study as an alternative way to study educational programs and practices, contrasting positivistic and measurable views. This provides a foundation for examining research question #3, “What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community?”

Case studies are a study of bounded systems, made rich by comprehensive data collection, multiple and various sources of data, researched over a period of time (Stake,

1995). In fact, Yin (2014) articulates that an effective case study requires strong research questions, thorough understanding of the literature related to the case, and an effective research design.

Case studies enable researchers to fully engage with contextual factors that impact the phenomena being researched and are effective when research is interpersonal, enacted through personal interaction. As a highly interactive methodology, the case study is dependent on the researcher maintaining quality relationships, not only for accessing the research site but also for maintaining an effective research environment (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Eacott (2016), in speaking to studying relational leadership, argues that “educational administration can only be understood in relation to contemporary social conditions” (p. 8). To this end, he advocates for analyses that enable the researcher study actions of leaders contextually: “An analysis that separates action from contexts destroys that which is sought to understand” (p. 9).

Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) posit that knowledge is created through being interconnected. Therefore, to develop a holistic case of an organization, the researcher must examine relationships at multiple levels within the organization. In studying relational leaders in schools, the researcher must study leaders at multiple levels of relation and analyze a leader’s intergroup and intragroup relations (Ashkanasy et al., 2012). Studying relational space enables the researcher to examine numerous perspectives, for knowledge is occurring between two or more subjects, and therefore multiple meanings are generated by those participating in the relational space (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2012). Uhl-Bien (2006) names that different methodologies can be used for studying relational leadership, including qualitative approaches that support

“interview-based methodologies” (p. 672). When studying relational leadership, Bradbury and Lichtenstein advocate for qualitative methods that “uncover the invisible assumptions that generate social structures” (p. 557).

Merriam (2009) describes a case study as a comprehensive description and examination of a bounded system. She adds that the most defining attribute of a case study methodology is the delimitation of the case or the entity being studied. Merriam stresses that studying a bounded system through a case study is appropriate when one particular program or phenomenon is examined. In this study, the phenomenon being examined is that of the implementation and utilization of restorative practices in the school culture. She adds, “If the researcher is interested in the process of changing the organizational culture of the workplace, for example, he or she could select a particular instance of organizational change to study in depth” (pp. 41–42). Willis and Jost (2007) uphold that case studies are about real people in authentic situations; the case study sheds light on how the reader comes to understand the case or phenomenon that is being studied. Under an interpretivist perspective, “researchers do not seek to find universals in their case studies. They seek, instead, a full, rich understanding (*verstehen*) of the context they are studying” (Willis & Jost, 2007, p. 240).

Merriam (2009) describes three special features of case studies: *particularistic*, *descriptive*, and *heuristic*. Particularistic means that the study focuses on a particular program, event, or phenomenon. She describes the case as important for the revelation it brings forth regarding the program or phenomenon. Descriptive means that the study produces a *thick* description of the program or phenomenon that is being studied. Thick implies that the description is a complete and in-depth description of the case under

study. Finally, the heuristic feature implies that the case provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the program or phenomenon that was researched. Merriam believes that reports of case studies “pour vignettes and narratives that feed into the naturalistic generalizations of readers and writers” (p. 44).

Yin (2014) describes a case study as “an empirical study” that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). Yin adds that the use of a case study to study a contemporary phenomenon enables the researcher to study both the present and the recent past: recent implies that the researcher can make direct observations and research individuals and groups who experienced the phenomenon firsthand.

This case study examines a middle school in southern Ontario, studying the phenomenon of undertaking a 4-year journey toward building a restorative culture and examining, through a relational leadership perspective, how relationships and dialogue are employed by members of the school community for implementing, employing, and sustaining a restorative relational culture. The case is bounded by time (4 years), and the phenomenon of restorative practices, specifically for improving school culture, to ultimately impact school characteristics including safety, learning, relationships, and school community. The school as organization provides multiple levels of participants who are able to speak to the leadership, the change process, and the current culture. As a study in the field of leadership, the case study is a methodology that readers in the administrative and organizational field will uphold as reliable and valid. As a study of individuals and of groups, the case study provides for effective study of culture.

Furthermore, as a study of individuals and groups in dialogue, the case study holds the potential to develop thick and rich research through individuals' stories and perspectives. As a recent endeavor, the case study upholds the ability to research into the past and to learn from individuals who experienced the change, the transition, and the result of the culture change endeavor. Yin (2014) adds that case study is appropriate for research when the researcher is seeking to answer *how* or *why* questions, when the researcher has minimal influence on the case, and when the study is a study of recent or current events. The research questions, my positioning in the research as an outsider, and the study of a recent undertaking by a school to take on a change process to embed a restorative philosophy in the school culture enable this study to be fulfilled through case study research.

The Case

Yin (2014) encourages researchers to have criteria and a rationale for why a given case was chosen. When seeking a school to study, I sought a school that had invested time (at least 3 years) and resources (training) for building a restorative culture, and school leadership that believed that restorative practices had influenced the culture of the school. The use of restorative practices was a school board initiative. At the same time, the principal of the school had personally invested in learning more about restorative practices. These two factors contributed to the school leadership initiating a culture change endeavor. Training of staff in restorative practices had been an irregular but ongoing process, whereby school staff—including staff new to the school—had been trained in restorative approaches. A portion of the students at the school were trained as peer mediators, encouraged to use restorative practices to address and resolve conflict.

The school had been endorsed by an international restorative group for their work with restorative practices, upholding their commitment to restorative approaches as a key element of the school's vision for supporting members of the school community and learning. Four years after the initial implementation, the principal at the school deemed that the use of restorative practices was integral to the current culture of the school. These qualities provided the framework for studying the journey of a school to lead culture change using restorative practices.

The school also served practical criteria that I sought in a school. First, the school district is open to my research, and the administration at the school supported my research. Second, I wanted to investigate a school in the public system, as the research for my Master's thesis was done in an independent school. Finally, the school needed to be within an hour of my home so I could access the school on a regular basis.

School Characteristics

The school is located in a suburban setting in southern Ontario. The school has a diverse student population, both in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The student population includes Middle Eastern, North African, Chinese, Caribbean, and Caucasian students. In terms of socioeconomic status, some students come from middle class families, while other students are from families that require subsidized housing. The school caters to the learning needs of all students, including special education classes for students with learning disabilities and students who are gifted. The diversity of the school population is an effective setting for examining how investing in dialogue and building positive relationships are employed for establishing the restorative culture in the school.

The Value of a Single Case

Sergiovanni (2000) states that “good schools improve one at a time” (p. 22). A single school has a rich story to tell in relation to culture change endeavours. Researchers that desire rich description of a case are less concerned with developing generalizable theory (Klenke, 2008). Patton (2002) upholds that single cases in the study of leadership are often distinctive or extreme and reveal unique descriptions and stories of leadership decisions and processes. Klenke (2008) upholds the single case as potentially being a critical case revealing unusual phenomena. In the uniqueness, Stake (1995) expounds that qualitative case studies allow the qualitative researcher to emphasize “episodes of nuance, the sequentially of happening in context, the wholeness of the individual” (p. xii).

Case Study Misunderstandings

There are misunderstandings associated with case studies. Acknowledging and addressing the apprehensiveness around the methodology enables validity of the methodology to be upheld. Simons (2009) speaks to the myths of case studies and seeks to dispel them. First, she addresses the myth that case studies are too subjective. Guba and Lincoln (1989) stress that value of qualitative research is the subjective inquiry, for qualitative case study research recognizes subjectivity and seeks to establish how both participant’s and researcher’s values and perceptions influence the research. Second, Simons speaks to the inability to generalize. She recognizes that there is the reality of *naturalistic generalization*, whereby the case causes readers to identify and acknowledge similarities and variances of the case as they relate to similar cases. In addition, Simons upholds *situated generalization*, in that participants situated in the case may adopt

findings if they make personal connections to the research, and if research participation was a positive experience.

Flyvberg (2006) also speaks to misunderstandings of case studies. First, he addresses the desire by some for research to bring forth general knowledge rather than practical knowledge. Flyvberg speaks to the need for both types of knowledge, for theory and application are necessary for effective organizations. Case studies allow space for both understanding that a given case may limit general theory while also providing examples of leadership and education in action. In speaking to the potential limits of a single case, Flyvberg refers to the cases as black swans, recognizing that unique cases are valuable to research and can make contributions to how one understands theory. In the same vein, Flyvberg upholds that unique cases may provide supportive or contrary examples that provide samples for examining existing theory. In speaking to the potential for researcher bias in case study research, Flyvberg pushes for the researcher to be explicit in both his reflexive stance and in his research methods in order to ensure the research is valid. Finally, in recognizing that case studies are not useful specifically for developing general propositions, Flyvberg endorses the value of case studies in that they play a role in the cumulative development of the field of study and that the ultimate value of a case can lie in its uniqueness rather than in generalizing large amounts of data.

Reflexivity

Simons (2009) speaks to the need for the researcher to be transparent, and that the *I* and *self* in the research should be evident. Furthermore, the researcher needs to continually examine how one's self impacts the outcome. The researcher's ability to reflect on his or her actions through the research process allows others to view how the

self influences the researcher's interpretations and conclusions (Simons, 2009). Klenke (2008) speaks to the fact that researchers are not neutral bystanders and therefore they cannot stand independent of the case. Simons upholds the value of the researcher speaking to his or her knowledge and experience. In fieldwork, experience and knowledge enable the researcher to notice patterns, incidents, or actions that one without such experience may not observe or be aware of.

As previously stated, I have worked with restorative practices for approximately seven years in a high school setting. I have been trained by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) in the use of circles and in approaches for responding to conflict and misbehaviour. I worked for 2 years providing part-time restorative support in my own school, proactively working with students to address needs and to provide learning and behaviour support. In addition, I facilitated responses to misbehaviour with students, colleagues, and the school community. I have lectured several times to Brock University education students, introducing them to the foundations of restorative practices. Finally, I have led workshops and courses, training teachers and administrators in the use of restorative practices in schools.

Recognizing that I have invested many years in understanding restorative practices, both as a researcher and as a practitioner, impacted the research. Nevertheless, my goal in this research was to learn from the leadership, the staff members, and the students in another organization and to discover how they implemented and employed restorative practices. It was crucial for me that I was not engaged in action research, whereby I would be involved actively with the participants. I sought to be present as a researcher rather than as a restorative practitioner, employing my knowledge to recognize

restorative patterns, practices, and language that was revealed during the research process. Ultimately, I sought to create a picture of this restorative culture and the leadership and change processes that enabled this school to establish where they are today.

Simons (2009) suggests several ways in which the researcher can be self-reflexive, responding to the self in the research process. She suggests recording issues in images or metaphors and recording personal reactions to incidents, people, or organizational politics related to the phenomenon under study. She encourages the researcher to document feelings of approbation or indignation that arise during the research process. Simons believes this is best done through a journal or diary whereby the researcher can identify how his or her subjectivity enters the case and the analysis and interpretation of the research.

I journaled throughout the research process, addressing the emotions elicited by my interactions with participants through observations, interviews, and focus groups. I bracketed my understanding as I researched, focusing on creating an active description of how members of this school lead, understand, and employ restorative practices, while seeking to create distance between my background and my values from the context, processes, and dialogues I researched at the school. My background knowledge provided a foundation for recognizing restorative practices, but nonetheless, I learned from this organization as I researched. This research was a stepping-stone as I journeyed from personal reflection regarding restorative practices and continued in my development as a researcher, as a student of leadership, and as a student of restorative practices, ultimately

developing literature that helped readers to better understand the phenomenon of leading restorative cultures.

Methods

This study employed a *descriptive* and *explanatory* case study methodology (Yin, 2014) of a middle school in southern Ontario currently employing relational restorative practices and examined how restorative approaches were revealed in the culture of this school. Yin describes a descriptive case study as “a case study whose purpose is to describe a phenomenon (the ‘case’) in its real-world context” (p. 238). The explanatory study seeks to explain how some condition came to be. These two perspectives are congruent with the research questions that sought to describe the leadership process in developing a restorative culture, aiming to explain how the restorative culture came to be and describing what that culture looked like in the present. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with the principal, the vice-principal, support staff, and teachers. There were two student focus group interviews. A four-session observation was conducted in a single classroom to examine the relational and dialogic processes and pedagogy employed in the class. In addition, I used participant observations, documents, field notes, and journaling. I employed individual interviews with staff in the school, for interviews enable an individual to answer out of personal context, upholding the constructionist perspective of relational dialogue. The focus group setting enabled student participants to speak to personal perspective but also to create meaning in the dialogic space, upholding the social constructionist perspective of relational leadership theory. Focus groups—and not interviews—were used solely with students. “The inclusion of children in research advances the commitment to justice in research by improving our

knowledge of, and ability to respond to, the unique needs of children throughout their development” (Government of Canada, 2015, para. 4). Nonetheless, in terms of research with children, focus groups are favoured over one-on-one interviews with children, for one-on-one interviews between a child and an adult can be considered invasive or threatening (Barbour, 2007). Therefore, I employed two focus group interviews as the context for upholding student voice, ensuring students feel that their voice can be heard in a safe environment.

The school district recommended that a letter be sent to parents and guardians of children in the student body prior to my commencement of research, explaining the purpose of my research, the time frame of the research, and that I was seeking to observe students and recruit students for the focus groups, acknowledging that participation in the study in any form required both the consent of the parent and the assent of the student. This was another way to ensure that I was not being invasive and that I was seeking to meet the needs and uphold the safety of the students of the school.

Focus Groups

Focus group interviews enable dialogue amongst members of the school community rather than solely with the interviewer. This dialogue enables the researcher to examine how participants establish meaning through the space and context they share. I originally sought a focus group of six teachers and support staff to enable the study of relationality through dialogue. Due to the scheduling at the school and the after-school demands of the teachers and support staff, this focus group was not practical. I expanded the number of individual interviews to gain the voices of as many staff as possible, such

that I felt the data were saturated: I was hearing and observing similar views, values, and stories from the staff members signifying that the data were robust.

A focus group of six students was included to ensure that student voice was integral to this study. Upholding student voice democratizes academic research by providing the opportunity for students to contribute to the conversations that impact their scholastic lives (Vaandering, 2013). In order that students could speak to the culture of the school, I sought students that had had at least one full year in the school in order to be interviewed. Students were in grades 7 or 8, with equal representation across the two grades. In terms of the period of research, this meant that students ranged from age 12 to age 14. I had equal gender representation amongst the students in the focus group. Based on the demographic characteristics described, I worked with the principal and the vice-principal to establish a pool of potential student participants. I randomly chose from the pool, and these participants received a one-on-one verbal invitation to participate in the study along with a letter of invitation. I followed up a week later to ask if the potential participant would like to participate in the study. I continued this until I had six students who were willing to be involved in the research.

The student focus group was conducted two times for three reasons. First of all, the second interview allowed me as the researcher the opportunity to respond to the answers from the first interview. The second interview also enabled the participants to consider perspectives that may have changed as the interview process may have changed how they viewed the culture of the school. Finally, the second interview was a way of honouring the participants' time, as an interview with six individuals gives each participant only 10 minutes to speak in a one-hour focus group. The second interview

provided a further opportunity for the voice of the participants to express their knowledge, perspective, and worldview.

“The benefits of focus group research include gaining insights into people’s shared understandings of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation” (Gibbs, 1997). As a study of restorative dialogue and relationships, the student focus group was a strong method for upholding the philosophical foundations of this research. Recognizing that social dynamics can be influential and potentially harmful, I took every precaution to uphold the dignity and worth of the participants. Students were provided a copy of the focus group interview questions a week prior to the interview in order that students were aware of what was being asked of them, so that they could think about their responses and to reduce anxiety during the interview itself (see Appendix A). The interview questions were operationalized from the research questions and literature to form the focus group interview. In the consent and assent forms for focus groups, participants and guardians were informed that due to the nature of focus groups, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Student participants and guardians were informed that participants would each be asked individually prior to commencing the interview, and following the interview, to not repeat or comment on what was said during the focus group interview in order to uphold the confidentiality of the individuals and the information from the focus group session. Debriefing following focus groups was essential to enable participants to bring forth concerns they had about the focus group process (see Appendix B for focus group interview guide). Each interviewee was asked individually about the process and if she/he had any concerns about any aspect of the focus group interview (Barbour, 2007).

Member checking was employed with the student focus group, providing each participant the opportunity to review his or her transcript and to make additions or deletions such that the interview was a true reflection of the participant's perspective (see Appendix C). Participants received the full transcript with their individual responses highlighted.

Interviews

Interviews are an essential source of evidence, for interviews enable human interaction (Yin, 2003). Interviews enable a dialogue to ensue, a method consistent with the restorative conceptual framework. Interviews are valuable for attaining qualitative data. Researchers are unable to learn everything solely through observations; interviews enable the researcher to have some control over data collection, guiding participants through questions relevant to the research problem (Stake, 1995). Likewise, interviews enable the researcher to learn from information from participants that one might otherwise never encounter (Creswell, 2003; Dille, 2004).

A verbal invitation was given to the entire staff at a staff meeting. I followed this up with a letter of invitation. Upon agreeing to participate in the interview, participants completed a letter of consent that included detailed information regarding the interview and outlined the rights of the participant. *Semistructured interviews* were used with two administrators, six teachers, and four support staff members. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency for each participant and to ensure that I, as the researcher, addressed key ethical rights for each participant (see Appendix D). The interview questions were operationalized from the research questions and literature to form the semistructured interview. Participants were given the questions at least one week prior to the interview so that participants could consider their responses and so the risk of

surprising participants during the interview could be reduced (see Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G for interview questions). Member checking was employed with interview participants, providing each participant the opportunity to review his or her transcript and to make additions or deletions such that the interview was a true reflection of the participant's perspective (see Appendix C).

Pilot interviews were conducted prior to research in order to review the interview protocols to ensure the questions were answering the research questions and thereby increasing the validity of the interviews and the focus groups. A pilot interview was conducted with a high school administrator who had been involved in a six-year process of implementing restorative practices at a high school. A pilot interview was conducted with a high school teacher who had sought to implement restorative practices in the classroom. Finally, a focus group was conducted with five high school students from a school that upheld restorative practices as a key philosophy in the daily operations of the school.

Observations

Observations enable the researcher to study participants, their behaviours, and their interactions in a natural setting (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Silverman (in Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) remarks that observations are critical for investigating cultures, enabling researchers to determine how organizational members create reality.

Observations enable the researcher to understand how organizations are structured and the priorities within the organization. Through observations, the researcher comes to understand what is important to the organizational members and the culture. As a researcher, observations enable researchers to become known by participants, guiding the

researcher–participant relationship (Savin-Baden & Major).

Simons (2009) stresses the value of observations to case studies. Observations allow the researcher to establish an extensive picture of the research site, providing further richness to the research and a stronger foundation for analysis and interpretation. Observations are valuable for observation of school culture and for unearthing the values of the culture. For those participants who might avoid formal interview processes, observations provide an opportunity for capturing a part of their story and opening a new perspective. Observations can be effective for triangulating data from interviews, validating research from focus groups and interviews, and upholding that participants do what they say they do in the field.

General observations took place over a 12-week period on a once-a-week basis. Observations ranged from general school observations including staff meetings and extracurricular events, to specific observations of one teacher in one classroom over four class periods. The focus was on administration and teachers, their use of dialogic restorative processes, and the impact of employing restorative practices. The school district required that all students had active consent to be in an area where observations were taking place, for the processes employed by staff members would be fulfilled amongst the students and therefore processes could not be examined without observing the students. The consent to observation by the student was to honour the student as being a part of the restorative process and as active in the processes, but the research was a study of the staff member and the processes that s/he employed. As a study of relationality, the processes were fulfilled in and through the students. Staff and students were invited to be involved in formal observations of processes employed by staff

through a verbal invitation and through a letter of invitation. All students had consent and assent forms completed prior to being near staff being observed. All stories had identifying characteristics of students removed. I provided students, teachers, and/or administration a day of notice before observing. In addition, they were reminded that they could withdraw from the process at any moment. If either the student or the staff member chose to withdraw, I ceased to observe and I removed this observation. Students or staff could also choose to have observational field notes removed from the study. Again, the observation was focused on the restorative processes the teacher or administrator employed and not on the students themselves, though when processes were employed, students were involved directly or indirectly in the process.

The role of the researcher must be clear in observations (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). I positioned myself as a *complete* observer, observing the members, their behaviour, and their interactions, without participating in the organization (Creswell, 2003). Savin-Baden and Major (2013) emphasize that the researcher must ensure that observations are consistent with the methodology. I sought to observe how relationships and dialogue revealed the implementation and sustaining of restorative culture through everyday events in a school. I observed a classroom and then followed up with an interview with the classroom teacher. Other everyday events included staff meetings, assemblies, and extracurricular events led by staff. Observations helped to establish a holistic picture of the culture of the middle school.

Documents

Documents were employed as a source of data for addressing the questions associated with this study. Literature and policy specific to restorative practices were

limited. The majority of the documents employed were posters and student work found on walls within the school. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) stress that four questions should be asked about every document: Is it authentic? Is it credible? Is it representative? What does it mean? I analyzed documents using these four questions in the context of the restorative framework and the overarching questions for this study.

In case studies, documents enable the researcher to have a window into the culture of the organization. Documents, as a window into the culture, provided context for observations, focus group interviews, and one-on-one interviews, establishing a stronger foundation for analysis, comparison of data, and triangulation of data (Simons, 2009).

Field Notes, Memos, and Journals

Yin (2014) promotes the use of field notes throughout the research process. These might arise through formal observations or during casual data collection activities. Yin stresses that field notes should also be employed during the use of all methods including formal interviews, focus groups, and observations. The notes provide additional information about the topic under study, including descriptive observations and thoughts or questions. Through the field notes, the researcher expands the methods for data comparison, and strengthens the validity of the research. Charmaz (2014) urges researchers to keep a methodological journal. The journal serves to address methodological dilemmas and decisions, allowing the researcher to maintain a constant state of reflexivity. I maintained both field notes and a journal throughout the process, providing a record of both my research processes and a reflexive narrative of my journey in the research.

Validity, Reliability, and Rigour

Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) push for rigorous qualitative research, whereby the researcher can ensure the integrity and quality of a study. Rigour can be established through one's research design. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four areas of rigour that can be established in design: *credibility*, *dependability*, *confirmability*, and *transferability*.

Credibility arises from the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, to confirm a given phenomenon. As noted earlier, interviews, focus groups, participant observations, field notes, documents, and a student focus group were employed to validate the findings of the study. Houghton et al. (2013) stress the importance of the completeness of data, employing pilot studies, member checking, and peer debriefing. Pilot studies of the interview for administration, of the interview for teachers, and of the student focus group were employed prior to research to refine questions, to strengthen parameters of the case, and to test research procedures.

Houghton et al. (2013) define dependability as the stability of data. They state that confirmability is the accuracy of data. This has often been referred to as *reliability* in quantitative research. Dependability and confirmability are achieved through establishing an "audit trail" (Houghton et al., 2013, pp. 14–15). The audit trail provides a narrative of the research process, not only describing the chronological process but also providing a rationale for decisions made throughout the research process. Furthermore, the methodology and rationale employed throughout the process need to be grounded in theory (Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Yin encourages researchers to use a *case study protocol*. The protocol explicitly states the instruments and procedural steps of the study.

Furthermore, the protocol states the questions to be used for data collection and guides the final report. A case study protocol was developed to structure and execute my research strategy. This was done to ensure transparency, dependability, confirmability, and accuracy in this study. For this research, I was journaling throughout the process in order to document the process, to be explicit in stating my own views, and to track my decision-making processes.

Transferability arises from the ability of the reader to transfer findings to his or her specific context. The transferability comes out of the rich and thick descriptions created by the researcher through the rigour employed throughout the study (Houghton et al., 2013). While the researcher cannot make generalizations, specifically when a single case is employed, inferences and judgments can be made. Yin (2014) adds that the researcher must be able to address *rival explanations* for inferences made in order to bring *internal validity* to the research that enables transferability of the results.

In establishing validity, the researcher seeks to establish that the case is intelligible, defensible, grounded, and recognized as quality research (Simons, 2009). Wolcott (1999) adds that researchers need to establish their work as credible. The researcher wants to validate what participants do in the field through multiple sources of data, for people can overestimate what happens in the field. In supporting validity in case study design, Simons (2009) looks to *construct validity*, *internal validity*, and *external validity*. Validity in case studies is often grounded in triangulation, supporting data through multiple methods, different types of data, from individuals in multiple roles in the organization (Klenke, 2008; Simons, 2009). Construct validity involves operationalizing measures for multiple sources of data. In this case study, sources

included administration, teachers, students, and support staff, through focus groups, observations, semistructured interviews, and documents. Pilot interviews and member checking supported the construct validity of the case. Internal validity was established through correlated variation between data through coding and triangulation and linking the correlated variation to relevant literature. External validity was established further through connecting literature to findings and interpretations, thereby ascertaining analytic generalizations. The case study protocol and the coding schemes sought to establish the case as reliable and capable of being reproduced as a study (Simons, 2009).

Strengths and Limitations of Case Studies

Yin (2014) deems it valuable to understand both the strengths and limitations of case study methodology. Merriam (2009) observes many strengths of case study research. The case's whole view of a phenomenon, through thick description and rigour, enabled greater meaning than many other types of qualitative research. She views case study as valuable for educational research that examines innovations or evaluates systems. Likewise, Simons (2009) stresses that case studies have value in studying programs, their complexity, and the context in which they are situated. The case study is a vivid and concrete depiction enabling the reader to tie the case into his or her personal experience. While the researcher may make inferences, it is the reader that generalizes the case to his or her own reality, tying together understanding and experience and vicariously learning through the documented phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009). Specifically, in relation to leadership and change, the case study examined the dynamics of change, determined critical factors and patterns associated with change, and linked implementation with current culture. The case study's strength was in the use of multiple

perspectives, employing multiple actors and multiple methods to create a story of a phenomenon of leading the development of a restorative culture. The actors, through their voice, became coparticipants in the research process, thereby empowering them to control knowledge and thereby partake in creating reality with me as the researcher (Simons, 2009).

Yin (2014) states some of the concerns associated with case study. He observes that some question the ability to generalize from case studies. Yin believes that generalizing from a case study—or making assumptions about other contexts based on a single case—is reasonable in the context of generalizing from theory, but the researcher's job is not to extrapolate from a single case study. Simons (2009) and Yin also view the individuality of the researcher as a potential limitation, for the case is situated in the inferences made by the researcher. The researcher possesses substantial discretion in terms of decisions, choices in writing, instincts, and biases. While the researcher often works alone, using member checking, case protocols, and peer debriefing, assisted in ensuring the integrity of both me as the researcher and the research.

Strengths and Limitations of this Research.

This research possessed many strengths. First, there was tremendous value in researching multiple groups of people in a school, including the principal, the vice-principal, teachers, support staff, and students. Second, the voices of students were important in this research. Smith (2000) states that one must involve students in qualitative and critical research to expand one's insight, for failing to do research with students simply reduces students to being statistics. Finally, this research provided the opportunity for dialogue. The semistructured interviews enabled me as the researcher to

dialogue with participants. The focus groups provided an opportunity for the researcher to facilitate a dialogue between participants and between the participants and the researcher. Kazepides (2010) describes the purpose of dialogue as progressing towards understanding the viewpoints, purposes, virtues, and assumptions of those engaged in the dialogue. Dialogue is critical to the foundations of this research, and these methods upheld the use of the foundations in the methods and methodology. As a unique case in an area of research that is not well developed in literature, this case served to add to research around the topic of leading restorative culture change.

Limitations of this Case Study

This research has the following limitations: First, the number of students involved in the research was limited to six. This is a small percentage of the student body and limited the dialogues and stories that might bring forth critical information. Geehan (as cited in Innes, Moss, & Smigiel, 2001) suggests that every story is powerful, and teaches us something more about school life, whether it confirms present knowledge or brings forth new knowledge. The more stories we have, the more we can understand school life. While these stories as a whole were limited in number, they added to the complexity of the stories that existed. As for the teachers and staff involved in the research, often those who chose to participate were those who were advocates and allies for the research topic, specifically restorative practices. I worked to express that all viewpoints brought validity to the research. In this way, I could bring multiple voices and thereby multiple perspectives to the research.

It was my hope that the participants brought a balanced representation of the cultural assumptions related to restorative practices in the culture of the school.

Nonetheless, I as researcher had to consider that the full range of perspectives was not represented, further limiting the ability to generalize from theory as the research being used to generalize is not full itself. This study was a snapshot over a 12-week period of an ongoing story, made complex by how the story continually is changing, specifically by key events in the school. The case provided a picture in time of the culture that existed, of the perspectives of how that culture was created, and a panoramic perspective regarding how leadership was viewed in terms of the process and in the current culture. Noteworthy events can change one's perspective, and it is distinctly possible that if this research was done in another time frame, the responses would have differed. This upholds Yin's (2014) view that a case represents research where it is impossible to separate context and phenomenon, as context is forever changing, and one's understanding of the phenomenon of restorative is also developing and changing over time.

It is my intention that the case was an accurate picture of the school and its restorative culture as seen through relationships and dialogue for the period that I was researching. Through employing techniques to uphold reliability on this research, I pursued a case that would contribute greater understanding to how we understand the leading of restorative culture change as it relates to dialogue and relational leadership approaches.

The study was limited in terms of the methodology. Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) propose multiple methods for constructionist studies in relationality as researchers seek to study the "space between" (p. 556). They describe case study as effective for studying relationality from an interior view where the researcher is not visible, focusing on "interactions between researcher and researched" (p. 560). While the focus group and

observations brought me further into the culture of the school, I was not immersed in the front lines of the daily operations of the school. Bradbury and Lichtenstein also advocate for alternate methods for studying relationality, including methods where the researcher explicitly is in the research field to study interactions, including action research or ethnography. These methods would provide primary views—rather than secondary views—into relationality.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

When conducting qualitative research, data analysis starts during the research process (Klenke, 2008; Merriam, 2009). This characteristic of qualitative research upholds the emergent nature of the qualitative process. As a result, the researcher will respond to unforeseen and unanticipated data by reframing the case (Simons, 2009). The emergent data may impact the focus of future interviews and observations, directing the focus of the research. Yin (2014) stresses the use of memos and notes throughout the research process as a way to make an initial interpretation in the processes of conceptualizing the data as its part, and as a part of the research as a whole. As the data start to emerge, Yin (2014) encourages the researcher to start to “play” with the data, searching for patterns, insights, and concepts. Klenke (2008) advocates for a strategy of *constant comparison*, whereby the researcher continually is analyzing and interpreting. In being open to the data throughout the process, the researcher also needs to be willing to reexamine original assumptions, modifying research to develop the richest data possible. Simons (2009) stresses that the analysis must begin at the beginning of the research. Waiting until all the research is complete to commence analysis fails to provide opportunity to modify research to address themes that the protocol does not address. This

may ultimately impact the conceptual framework in order to account for new knowledge (Klenke, 2008). Analysis and interpretation is a process of focusing and refocusing to uphold the breadth and depth of the researcher's understanding of the patterns, topics, and themes associated with the data (Klenke, 2008; Simons, 2009). Furthermore, Simons (2009) underscores that hypotheses are working hypotheses and may be altered if the researcher determines that further themes and issues need to be investigated. Yin urges researchers to try different formats including arrays, timelines, flowcharts, and graphics to start to see what emerges, specifically in terms of the research questions. Yin suggests that one strategy for organizing data is to use the theoretical frameworks in the field of study. This will include the conceptual framework based around, relational leadership theory (Reitz, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006), a theory of dialogue (Buber, 1947; Reitz, 2015), and leading cultural change (Blackmore, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Smylie et al., 2016). Interviews were transcribed throughout the research process, allowing me as researcher to modify interview protocols to address gaps in the research process.

Stake (1995) upholds different types of analyses: *categorical aggregation*, *pattern matching*, and *analytic generalization*. In categorical aggregation, the researcher gathers data in which he or she believes rich data will come forth. In pattern matching, the researcher matches patterns from the research with patterns found in literature, thereby enhancing validity of the research. Finally, in analytic generalization, the researcher tests the validity of the research against the theory critical to the phenomenon and the research questions.

Coding

Klenke (2008) advocates for the use of coding during data analysis. Coding enables the researcher to express data in the form of concepts, classifying lines, paragraphs, or quotations into units of meaning. He encourages researchers to start with *open coding*, whereby codes and categories are linked to the raw text. Klenke then advocates for *axial coding*, whereby the researcher links subcategories to categories. At this level, the researcher works to link the coding and categories to the conceptual model. Finally, Klenke supports *selective coding*, whereby core categories are grouped around single categories or *supercodes*. Ultimately, the researcher seeks to reach *theoretical saturation*: No new data appear and concepts related to theory are well-developed. Fusch and Ness (2015) add that saturation is reached when the researcher has enough literature such that the study could be replicated, providing the researcher with the capacity to obtain new information. Sample coding for observations and comments is included in the appendices (See Appendix H).

Charmaz (2014) highlights that initial coding is an active process and that while the researcher may believe that codes fit the literature, the reality is that coding is also a response to what the researcher views as relevant. It is an interactive process. Charmaz promotes codes of action, for codes inhibit the researcher from coding types or categories of people. Likewise, the action codes prevent the researcher from making conceptual leaps. The researcher must still code in relation to the research questions and the framework driving the research. Charmaz upholds axial coding as focused coding whereby the researcher uses meaningful and common codes to sift through data and to make decisions about how to best make sense of the data in order to move forward in

analyzing. Charmaz stresses that the researcher must avoid data preconceptions and focus on what the data reveal through the coding process. During the coding process, open and axial coding were employed for analyzing the data. The selective coding or *supercoding* resulted in 12 themes that were used to present the findings of the research.

Qualitative Analysis Software

ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis and research software, was used for analyzing the data. Morris (1994) suggests many strengths of employing computerized content analysis. The software allows the researcher to stabilize the coding scheme, create explicit rules with comparable results, provides reliability outside of the researcher, allows easy manipulation of the text in terms of frequency counts, organization by codes, and other features, and analysis of keywords. Ultimately this serves to increase efficiency, support the richness of the final text, and provide a foundation for increased validity. Nevertheless, Morris cautions that complete reliance on the software is not recommended. The human element is critical for processing natural language, for responding to linguistic nuances including irony, sarcasm, and tone. Finally, word crunching and finding meaning purely out of numbers is dangerous and does not uphold the value of the data. The software provided an efficient way to organize transcripts and to code the data. The final selective thematic coding was organized by colour, an effective way to group the 12 themes, eliciting both emotion and a graphic quality through the colour scheme.

Interpretation

Lincoln and Guba (1985) articulate two key areas the researcher must focus on when interpreting findings. These learned lessons are uncovered through agreement

between the *findings* and the literature, and through *conflicts with the findings* and the literature. Wolcott (1994) stresses the need for robustness and richness in findings: “Data that doesn’t speak to the researcher won’t likely speak to the reader” (pp. 13–14). Simons (2009) stresses the need to go beyond one’s comfort zone and try alternative methods of interpretation to make sense of the data. He stresses the use of emotional and intuitive approaches to addressing the data in order to flesh out meaning.

Relational Research

Relational research has many implications for researchers. Relational research forces academics to reevaluate how one writes about research in leadership (Cunliffe, 2009). First and foremost, the researcher needs to reflect on his or her own assumptions about people and how those assumptions might impact organizational relationships, dialogues within the organization, and interviews and narrative research (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). The relational researcher, as one who holds to a relational ontology, needs to be cognizant of how this research impacts both the organizational members being researched and him/herself (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Ultimately, relational research can impact relational leadership literature. Relational research in terms of leadership has not been well developed (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational research has the potential to create positive social change in organizations, upholding social justice in schools (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Finally, in focusing on context, relational research is relevant to both researchers and the school community. Relational research enables one to examine both the theoretical and practical aspects of a school culture. (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000) Ultimately, quality relational research would have the potential to impact learning both at the university level and at grade schools.

Honouring Participants: Ethical Considerations

This study involved members of a school community including adults and adolescents. While ethics is important to all individuals, ensuring that the rights and best interests of grade school students are protected is essential. Prior to commencing any research, ethical approval was received from both Brock University and the public school board involved in this study.

A letter of invitation was sent to all potential interview and focus group participants, outlining the purpose of the study, the duration of the study, and the rights of the participants in the study. Language was made to be easily understood by the participants. This included employing simple vocabulary, especially for student participants. A consent form was provided to adults who chose to participate in the study. The consent form reviewed the rights of the participants; outlined the purpose, duration, and benefits of the study; stated the participant's role and rights in the study; and allowed the participant to provide consent to participate. An assent form was provided for adolescents who chose to participate in the study and a parental/3rd party consent form was provided for all guardians of adolescents in the study. The assent form and the parental/ guardian consent form reviewed the rights of the participants and parents/3rd parties; outlined the purpose, duration, and benefits of the study; stated the participant's and the parent's/3rd party's role and rights in the study; and allowed the participant and the parent/3rd party to provide assent/consent for the child to participate.

A voice-recording device was used to record one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews; one-on-one interviews and the focus group interviews were transcribed. This was stated in the consent and assent forms. All adult participants and student taking

part in one-on-one interviews and focus group interview received a list of questions that guided the interview, at least 24 hours in advance (See Appendix A, Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G). In the case of both one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews, interviewees were provided an opportunity for member checking whereby they had the opportunity to edit their transcribed responses (See Appendix C). Pseudonyms were used for referring to participants in Chapter Four (Findings) and in Chapter Five (Discussion) to uphold the anonymity of the participants.

Evaluating a school for a given component, specifically restorative culture change, can be viewed as judgment of a school's philosophy and actions. It was essential to ensure that the evaluation was viewed as an opportunity to uphold and celebrate the steps the school has taken for upholding an effective and safe learning environment. Furthermore, it was emphasized that critique was not a judgment but rather an opportunity for educating others on how restorative practices may impact the overall culture of a school. Finally, I emphasized how this research had the potential to benefit other educators and students through helping others to understand leading effective restorative culture change in schools. A summary of the findings will be provided to the school district, the school administration, and to all participants. Ethics approval for this research was granted by the Brock University Research Ethics Board under certificate REB 14-286.

Summary

In Chapter Three, I reasoned that a case study methodology was effective for researching the leading of restorative culture change in a middle school. Fullan (2006) states that to study change, one must study the change in individuals and the change in

culture. A case study enables the researcher to examine the journey of individuals within a school over a set period of time, thereby allowing the researcher to examine the changes taking place. Tsang (2014) states that interpretivism views social reality as constructed by individuals, upholding that meaning is subjective and thereby results in multiple realities based on the individual's perspectives. The case study elicited responses from students, teachers, support staff, and administration in order to bring forth varied understandings and experiences to establish the story of restorative culture change in the school. Simons (2009) suggests that interpretivism is best pursued as qualitative research. She adds that qualitative case studies are strengthened by multiple perspectives brought forth by participants. This case study sought to bring forth rich data that could strengthen leadership literature as it pertains to investigating restorative culture change in an educational setting.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Reimer (2011) suggests that school leaders, members of school boards, teachers, and support staff need to learn from other school communities that have journeyed through implementing restorative practices in their schools. Yet, there are few studies, specifically in a Canadian context, that document the stories of leading restorative culture change. This case study of leading the implementation and execution of utilizing restorative practices in a school setting reveals how members of the school community—students, teachers, support staff, and administration—viewed, experienced, and navigated the culture change. Specifically, the purpose of the research was to study how school leadership engaged in leading the school community through the change process of developing a restorative school culture. The research explored three questions:

1. What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture?
2. How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community?
3. What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community?

The case study was conducted over a 13-week period. Two semistructured interviews were conducted with school administration, four semistructured interviews with school support staff, and six semistructured interviews with teachers from the school. Two focus group sessions were led with six students. Four classroom observations were used with one class. Other observations included school assemblies, office interactions, and student work in school hallways. Field notes were a critical part

of the data collection process, as was journaling as I reflected on daily interviews, interactions, and insights.

In analyzing data, Merriam (2009) advocates for using *open codes*, and then to go beyond the descriptive codes to *analytical coding*, coding that brings in the researcher's interpretation and reflects on the meaning of the data. I used this method with each of my sources of data and then merged this list to create what Merriam refers to as *categories* or *themes*. Following my research, the data were merged into 12 themes. The themes come out of two areas. First, Yin (2014) proposes that one relies on existing *theoretical propositions* that led to the case study. While my research experience was limited, I have a thorough knowledge of the existing restorative literature, making this a valid method for analyzing the data. Likewise, Yin suggests that working with data from the *ground up* is one method for analyzing data. As previously mentioned, my goal was not to develop theory but to add to the literature surrounding the leading of restorative practices and the building of a restorative culture. My knowledge of the literature enabled me to note new streams and themes that arose out of this research as well as to recognize themes common to restorative literature. These methods were used to ultimately answer the questions associated with this research.

Twelve themes emerged from the research:

1. What is Restorative? Perspectives on a Restorative Philosophy
2. Leading for a Restorative Culture: Implementing and Leading a Restorative Vision
3. Training: Leadership Investing in a Restorative Foundation
4. Questions, Dialogue, and Circles: The Heart of Restorative Practices

5. Restorative Responses to Conflict
6. Leading Restoring Practices out of an Ethic of Care
7. Resisting Change and Resisting the Resisters
8. Humanizing a School Culture
9. Learning and Restorative Practices
10. A Culture Revealed
11. Celebrating the Story
12. Research as Professional Development

As previously stated, Stake (1995) advocates for pattern matching, whereby the researcher matches patterns from the research with patterns found in literature, thereby enhancing validity of the research. The patterns of themes are listed to make sense of the story of the school rather than listed in order of importance or popularity. Prior to addressing the themes, I provide my first impressions of the culture and climate I was walking into at the school.

A Taste of the Culture

The first day I walked into the school, I was immediately greeted by a student, three steps inside the front door. “Hello”, she kindly said. “Which way to the office?” I asked. The student led me around the corner and pointed me inside (Observations, March 8, 2016). I thought this might be an anomaly, but I was wrong. Students continually smiled at me, greeted me, and asked who I was. This in a school where visitors were regularly entering and exiting the school. Students held the front door open for me as I approached the school (though they were not supposed to). I reminded them that visitors needed to contact the office before entering the school and asked them to close the door

so I could enter the school with the consent of the front office staff. Experiencing friendly students was a regular part of my daily research process (Observations, June 1, 2016). I spent time observing a class at the school: After my first visit, students greeted me by name as I entered the class (Observations, June 2, 2016). I credit the teacher of the classroom for explaining who I was, what I was doing, and for continually using my name. I also credit the culture of the school as one that warmly welcomed individuals from outside of the school community into the school (Field Notes, June 2, 2016). I witnessed a staff member teaching the value of greeting people just prior to starting my first interview. A student stopped by the room to ask the support staff member a question. When the student did not address me, the support staff member asked, “Can you introduce yourself to Mr. Webb?” (Observations, March 30, 2016). It was a small window into the importance this staff member placed on ensuring that students recognized the importance of greeting all people (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

The staff at the school demonstrated their care for me, continually asking how the process was going. Like the students, staff members greeted me and invited me into the community. While some openly admitted that they were not actively using restorative practices, this did not prevent them from supporting me and my research. (Observations, April 20, 2016). Early in the research process, I attended a staff meeting to introduce who I was and my purpose for being at the school. Having a staff member sit down beside me and take an interest in me and my work made standing in front of the staff much easier (Field Notes, March 8, 2016).

Walking through the halls, posters and pictures demonstrated that the school was a place to uphold values. Posters promoting responsibility, respect, cooperation,

inclusion, caring, character, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, loyalty, and honesty could be found throughout the hallways, though primarily in the main foyer. Several posters were up around the school, upholding the need to “THINK” when using social media: an acronym for is it True, is it Hurtful, is it Illegal, is it Necessary, and is it Kind? Signs promoted the value of education for pursuing excellence, working cooperatively, and demonstrating resilience. Posters were also on the walls endorsing learning opportunities outside of the school including an LGBTQ conference and a language course for enhancing one’s first language or for learning new languages. A poster that struck me was one promoting high support and high expectations, where students were told, “You have a right to get help, and a responsibility to ask” (Documents; Observations, April 6, 2016).

While the message of the posters impressed me, as I walked away from the foyer I took notice of the student products on the walls in the hallways. The student work revealed how they were learning, negotiating, and reflecting on values in their learning. Using quotes, definitions, and art work, students spoke to many values including decision-making, time management, pursuing their best, human rights, right and wrong, being active in (doing) learning, personal responsibility, goals, success, and optimism (Documents; Observations, April 6, 2016). While posters are important, seeing many of the same values on the posters reflected in student products and posters with student language brought the values to life as the students clearly engaged with the values personally (Field Notes, April 7, 2017). These values continue to be brought forth in the 12 themes that follow.

Theme #1: What is Restorative? Perspectives on a Restorative Philosophy

Descriptions and interpretations of restorative practices can be varied. I have opened with this theme to ground the data in the perspectives of the participants and the members of the school community, demonstrating the systems and language they employ when working with restorative practices. Furthermore, the section provides a foundation for how restorative practices is viewed philosophically, revealing evidence of restorative practices in the school, and establishing a scaffold for future sections.

Members of the school community had diverse understandings of how one might define restorative practices. The vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, focused on the value of repairing relationships. This included the need to mend both relationships between students but also relationships between teachers and students. He appreciated how restorative practices provided both the opportunity to share one's feelings but also the opportunity to listen, allowing those in conflict to move forward. In speaking to relationships, the principal, Ms. Amherst, stated:

One of my key staff members always says, "You can't restore a relationship that never existed." The most important thing is to build a community, have everyone invest in the community, everyone accountable for the community, and then when something goes wrong you have a structure in place and a means by which somebody can be held accountable. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

A teacher, Mr. Gardiner, also emphasized the value of restorative practices as a means of bringing everyone involved in conflict together in order to move people toward being respectful of each other through the ability to see the other's perspective. Teachers expressed the value of taking responsibility for one's action when students have

committed wrongs. *Support staff* encompassed staff at the school who served students outside of a classroom setting including counsellors in Student Services, behaviour specialists, and librarians. A support staff member, Mr. Carter, expressed it in this way:

It's not like a "I'm sorry" kind of thing. It's *this is what happened, this is the impact it had on you and myself*, and *this is what I need to move forward*, and then hearing what that person needs to move forward. And that's like the true essence of restorative I feel. And maybe, at the end of the restorative piece or whatever practice we use, maybe those people, maybe they never talk again, but that's better to go through that process and hear each other out than just giving an arbitrary sorry, and then when they see each other, there's a snicker here and a snicker there. I just think restorative brings teens back together. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

Mr. Carter's response reflects the use of the restorative questions.

One student, Nasir, associated restorative practices with safety. A second student, Rania, expressed the value of restorative practices as seeing every student on the same side, creating a place where everyone in a class can talk and support each other. A third student, Omar, also associated restorative practices with the concept of resolution. He explained how circles were used by teachers to ask students what they were thinking, to start a process of turning negatives into positives, and thereby eliminating problems. In relation to this, another teacher, Mr. Jackson, noted that solving issues restoratively was beneficial, for it sought to resolve issues between parties in conflict. In this way, long-term solutions were created for resolving issues. Having parties work directly with each

other reduced the issues of the grudge and the long term hurt, for if the original resolution failed to resolve these issues, the conflict continued to fester.

Many members of the school community associated restorative practices with dialogue and voice. A support staff member, Ms. Ennie, noted that when dialogue is used between the “harmed” and the “accuser,” more accountability is brought to the process. A teacher, Mr. Hutchison, built on this, citing that when the victim could communicate to the perpetrator, the perpetrator could better understand the impact of his/her actions. Ms. Lewis, a teacher, emphasized the need for teachers and students to communicate and to express feelings in the process:

When I talk to my kids, I always tell them how I am feeling and how that affects me. And that is important, because a lot of times, they don’t know. And same with them, with me. You know? You want to restore: you want to make things better so you can progress. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

Dialogue as a component of restorative practices will be expanded on in a future theme.

The principal, Ms. Amherst, likened a restorative school to a family, stating that in a family, when a child makes an error in judgement, the family does not say, “You’ve done something wrong; you can’t come home for a day” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She emphasized that they wanted students to know that the school was a safe place to work, to learn, and to get help with problems they were facing rather than be sent away from school due to issues going on. When the same administrator was asked what students thought about restorative practices she stated, “With restorative practices, it’s not a thing: it’s a way of being. It’s normalized in our school. The kids may not know it as restorative

practices. They just know it as the way we do business around here” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She added that students need to know that they have a voice, that they get to tell their story, that they are welcome at school, and that they get to be a part of the school community. Ultimately, she saw it as a more humane way to address students. When asked if students needed to know that the school was seeking to use restorative practices with students, she responded that if students appreciated how the school works with them, then “who cares what it is called” (Interview, April 26, 2016). The power of restorative practices was not in the name, but in how students were led. Ms. Amherst felt that what students experienced every day was most important, rather than understanding the restorative philosophy itself.

While some viewed restorative practices as a philosophy of building and restoring relationships, others saw restorative practices as a tool. Another teacher, Ms. Knight, suggested that restorative practices are a tool, a way to deal with behaviours to manage kids, to work with them, and to try to resolve issues. On the other side, support staff member, Ms. Frieze, expressed that when restorative practices are used by a few staff members, it can be solely viewed as a tool. “To be truly restorative, everybody needs to be part of that, because I think it is a cultural mindset about how you are going to deal with those difficult situations” (Interview, May 30, 2016). It was evident early in the research that perceptions of restorative practices differed across the school community.

Some staff members struggled to associate restorative practices with proactive strategies. The connotation of the word restorative for some staff members is often viewed principally as a means of reacting to conflict. Ms. Frieze stated, “When I think restorative practices, I am thinking more restorative in terms of fixing an issue that

happened rather than being proactive and building community” (Interview, May 30, 2016). Ms. Lewis, a teacher on staff, employed circles often in her classroom. She indicated that because it was not conflict, her first instinct was not to think of her community circles as restorative. “I just call it communication. I don’t really call it the restorative piece.” She said that communication allows students to step into the shoes of others. Nonetheless, she did associate restorative practices and communication. “Think about how much stuff gets lost in noncommunication. And that’s what restorative practices is for me, is the communication. It’s super important” (Interview, June 7, 2016). She added that communication helps students to feel good about themselves and others. The same staff member later stated that if people cannot put themselves in the shoes of others, they are going to be judgmental. Yet again, if communication was a proactive practice, she was not inclined to think of this as restorative practices, though she practiced proactive communication with her students on a regular basis.

In speaking to what would define success in terms of employing restorative practices at the school, both administrators had similar definitions. In referencing how students responded under a restorative philosophy, Ms. Amherst stated, “They want to be at school” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Likewise, Mr. Baccus added, “Kids are happy in class and they want to be in class” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Simply put, for the administrators, a restorative school is one where students want to be, happily engaged in learning at the school throughout the day. Rania, a student, expressed that she appreciated the spirit of the school that was created by modelling by staff members. She believed that the staff members in the school were working in and out of class to bring out the best in the students at the school.

Theme #2: Leading for a Restorative Culture: Implementing and Leading a Restorative Vision

There was general agreement that a restorative vision starts with the principal. This section focuses on school leadership, specifically the principal, and her role and vision for fulfilling a restorative culture in the school. Mr. Gardiner noted that it is the principal that dictates the structure of the school. Support staff member, Mr. Devine, remarked that it is when the principal, Ms. Amherst, came to the school that the staff started to consider the ideas and principles behind restorative practices. Vice principal, Mr. Baccus, remarked that Ms. Amherst was the catalyst for leading the culture change for she entered the school with the restorative mindset. Ms. Ennie compared this school to her previous school, noting that students responded to policies at this school because of the directive from administration. “At my old school that wouldn’t have worked, because it has to come from the top down” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Mr. Devine spoke to his internal battle with Ms. Amherst articulating the vision and his role in implementing the vision. He recalled the conflict between being a team member and being a resistor:

For me, it wasn’t the idea of restorative practice: it was who it was coming from. But again, as I developed a relationship with this person, I quickly began to realize that that was not the case. I was wrong. And I kind of regret it, because I misjudged her. With a kid, I would always give a kid the benefit of the doubt. Why can’t I give an adult the benefit of the doubt, or trust that they have good intentions rather than negative ones? And so, for me I had to move past that, but once I did...and I guess the credit I have to give to the principal was that she worked at developing a relationship with me. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

He made the conscious decision that he was a part of the school team and so he needed to be a part of the direction in which the school was being taken. The following section examines the theme of leading through a vision of leadership, the strategies used for implementing the vision, the staff response to the vision, and the need for more investment in the vision.

What is the Vision?

Staff members were asked what they believed the vision was for restorative practices at the school. In regard to the restorative vision, principal Ms. Amherst specified:

When I articulate our vision to the staff, I mean, we talk more about being a safe place to learn, and accountability, and things like that. But I wouldn't say... it's not written into our school vision but my vision for the school would be that everyone is consistently using those principles: students, teachers, parents, everybody, are using those principles as the basis for how we do business.

(Interview, April 26, 2016)

Mr. Devine described the vision as one that embraced a sense of openness for students and staff whereby people would feel safe to communicate honestly. "I think prior to that when things would go wrong, people would immediately go to—students and staff—people would immediately go on the defense and that would make it even more difficult to solve problems that arose" (Interview, April 14, 2016). Support staff, Mr. Carter, stressed the importance of collaboration in conflict situations, for collaboration established the foundation for students and staff to communicate during conflict. He believed that collaboration "kind of removes the power from the staff, and

empowers students. Which obviously, it does empower students, but it also empowers staff... it empowers the community, right?” (Interview, March 30, 2016). Vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, stressed the need for the vision to be consistent across the school. While he believed the vision should be the same, he also articulated that people had different ways of getting there. While he acknowledged that staff members might see the vision in different ways and even disagree with each other sometimes, he believed that they were moving in the same direction. Seeing the different ways people viewed the vision was exposed in the diverse values that staff members associated with restorative practices. The teachers’ view of the vision will be examined later in this theme.

Strategy for Implementing a Vision.

Ms. Amherst articulated strategies she used in leading the school community toward the vision for a restorative school. This included hiring, trust, training and resources, persistence, and responding to the changes in culture. Other staff members reflected on how they had seen Ms. Amherst work to fulfil this vision.

Hiring to a vision. Ms. Amherst described how hiring was a key part for fulfilling the vision. When she met with candidates for positions at the school, she sought those who could work in the vision, and communicated what they were being hired on to: “I am hiring you to my vision, and this is my vision. I am hiring you to be part of that vision... you are a part of what the school will be, not what it was” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She reminded staff that they were not being hired into the reputation of the school but that they were hired to be a part of leading the school to be what it could be. She recognized that hiring had an impact on the culture, and seeking out staff members who could work in her vision was crucial for successful change.

Trusting your staff. Ms. Amherst confidently stated, “That is the basis of all of the change at this school. Just trusting people” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She sought to build a culture of “yes,” where when staff wanted to try new things, they knew they would be provided that opportunity by the administration. Mr. Jackson recognized this in Ms. Amherst. He described that when he would go to the principal with an idea, it was not about “why?” but rather “tell me about it” (Interview, May 26, 2016). He said that a change in mindset impacted teachers in a positive way which flowed down to his students. Ms. Amherst expressed her desire to build capacity in staff around their teaching and around restorative practices. Her desire was to “treat everybody as if they are your best people” (Interview, April 26, 2016), for when one inspires her staff to be great, you need to get out of their way and let them flourish.

Training. Training was an integral part of implementing the restorative approach at the school. Ms. Amherst recognized that committing time to training was a sacrifice for teachers. “We kind of shoved all of the training at them... they are super... they are an amazing group of educators” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Nonetheless, Ms. Amherst also recognized the fruits that came from having the staff trained. The more that staff members were trained, the more there was a critical mass of staff members who were engaged with employing restorative practices, “And now it is normalized: It is the way we do business” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Mr. Carter appreciated Ms. Amherst’s approach toward providing training and walking people through the process. It made the vision for bringing restorative approaches to the whole school clearer. He said, “It’s expensive, and it’s timely, but at the very least I think that it sparked people’s curiosity” (Interview, March 30, 2016). The training provided the foundation for the staff to

implement the vision at the classroom level. The specific training experience will be expanded upon in a future theme.

Persistence. Ms. Amherst expressed the need for persistence during the initial stages of leading the school, specifically when implementing restorative practices. This was especially critical when addressing those who opposed changes at the school. She said that often when there was conflict associated with changes, people put their head down and waited for the conflict to go away. She articulated the need to continually make expectations clear, and then those in conflict regulated themselves as the expectations become the norm: the expectations became engrained in the culture. Mr. Carter spoke to the value of persistence in implementing restorative practices. He noted that persistence was a reminder that restorative practices was not just a one-off event or a short-term focus, but that it was an ongoing endeavour. He spoke to how staff could justify not investing in change because it was something new, outside of the box, and beyond what they needed to know. As staff started to hear how the topic was trending at the school board level, they started to consider that restorative practices were a larger movement than just their own school. Mr. Devine described Ms. Amherst's persistence in this way:

She didn't give up. She just kept persisting and she kept providing using the school resources that were available to her to make sure we had training in this area. And we spent a lot of time on it. And it took a while: it's not something that just happened. I think... there were some rough spots I think along the way, but overall as we progressed and progressed, and we kept getting more and more training and more and more exposure in restorative practices, that caused a

cultural shift in the way people saw things in our building. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

Persistence was required to lead the vision toward becoming the culture, for without continually moving the culture forward, change would not take hold.

Responding to changes. As the culture changed, Ms. Amherst recognized the need to continue to invest, the need to respond to those who were resistant, and the need to adapt systems that were influenced by the culture. The leadership team at the school had continual conversations about how best to support staff in implementing the change. The need to continue to be persistent and to model the restorative strategies were considered priorities. As the culture shifted and changes took hold, it was necessary to change the job descriptions of some of the support staff members. Because of the restorative culture, they were no longer bombarded with students with behaviour issues, especially at the office. The support staff members engaged in developing student leadership programs, a characteristic that can be seen throughout the school. Students were observed leading assemblies. During this time, students would encourage their peers by celebrating their participation in school activities, provide general announcements, and seek participation in upcoming events (Observations, April 22, 2016). One day I observed students hosting younger students from another school, proudly showing the students around their school (Observations, March 29, 2016). Students would also regularly share announcements at the end of the day over the P.A. system, encouraging students to partake in activities and school fundraisers. I observed that students were working on public speaking skills, presenting arguments around diverse societal topics including the EQAO (Education Quality and Accountability Office) and the value of

homework (Observations, April 22, 2016). Ms. Amherst spoke of the vision of the staff members who were actively changing their job descriptions and their roles. “[My support staff member] said, ‘Why would we have a Student Council? ... because a Student Council is like eight kids. If a hundred kids want to be leaders, why can’t a hundred kids be leaders?’” (Interview, April 26, 2016). The support staff members set out to fulfill the vision for more student leadership, training peer mediators and leading students to elementary schools to be playground leaders. The principal added: “So that is now part of our strategy... if we find kids who maybe are not really succeeding, we’ll find a leadership opportunity. And they are real ones, not like ‘let’s carry the water bottles for the team’” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Mr. Carter spoke to his role in developing student leadership as a member of support staff:

We have a group that runs Tuesdays...pretty much, some of our more socially engaging and confident students. They lay out a whole bunch of games in a room with me; we supervise it. Kids play, they talk... it’s more student driven.

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

This was an opportunity for students to connect with their peers in a safe environment.

Three of the six students in the student focus group spoke to their involvement as student leaders. Hanna described her participation in the student leadership team:

We come up with ideas together and we become the role models, because we have been told and we’ve been shown what we have to offer to students in our school. And the teachers here give us opportunities to do that. (Focus Group, April 27, 2016)

The same student stated how these opportunities allow her to explain her ideas to others and to feel like she is something to other students: “They learn from me and that way I feel like a leader, and it allows me to feel proud of myself because I am growing as a person...and this school has allowed me to do that” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Safia expressed how students thrive as both leaders and followers at the school:

In some groups people follow me, and we play and I teach people and they teach me. So that is why I think everybody here is a follower and a leader. So being a leader is something that is everywhere at the school. (Focus Group, May 27, 2016)

Finally, Omar added that the student group also has a role in responding to conflict, leading “students who don’t think about how their actions might have affected others” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016).

Responding to the Vision: A Response to the Leader

Teachers articulated their thoughts on the vision and their response to it, specifically in regard to how one’s perception of their relationship with a leader dictated how they would respond to the leader and the vision set forth by the leader. Ms. Knight stressed the importance of how the leader led: “I think for specific leaders, teachers would do anything” (Interview, May 31, 2016). Ms. Lewis emphasized the need to believe in your administration and their vision:

If you try to force this on them... they are gonna say...pffft. Even if they want to do it, they wouldn’t do it, because they don’t want to prove that to the principal or whatever. That’s the vibe I get. Even if they thought, “this is the best thing ever,” they won’t do it still. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

She added that teachers need to continually see the results of practices put into place, in this case specifically the restorative practices. Observing effective results can lead teachers to change. On the contrary, if the administration does not follow through and simply treats this like “just another” professional development activity, then staff do not care. From a teacher perspective, they desire to see the vision used authentically and effectively. If they do not see this, then they are not inclined to follow the vision.

Further Investment in the Vision

There is a consistent message that more work is needed in the school in order to continue to fulfill the vision. Ms. Amherst underlined the need for revisioning of the mission and values at the school to continue to move forward. Ms. Lewis believed that there was a vision, but that it is not followed through, at least not on a school wide-level. Ms. Ennie saw people moving in the same direction, and appreciated that “Everyone is on board here with the same policies. I love that about it. I think that is amazing” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Mr. Gardiner articulated the ambiguity he saw in the vision for restorative practices at the school and the need to spend time on this, for the vision was not clear and unified. While he believed that most staff have parts of what it means to be restorative, he stated, “What is our behaviour plan? If you were to tell me what is acceptable and not acceptable, and ask that question around the school, you’d have 45 staff... you’d have 45 different answers. So, I think that is a problem” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Finally, Mr. Carter conveyed the need for staff to be invested in the process for restorative practices to be successful:

When people are open to making things better, I think that’s the best practice you could possibly use. And it’s also important to realize when parties aren’t as

involved or invested in making it better, because if they're not invested in making it better we are wasting our time. That's the honest truth, unfortunately. I wish we were in a better position, where everybody is [invested]. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

Ms. Lewis stressed the need for people to simply start using their training, but also recognized that adults can be “stuck in their ways,” and they do not like to be “told what to do” (Interview, June 7, 2016). She expressed the dilemma of providing enough training for staff, but adding that ultimately training alone is not enough: They must use the training every day. She suggested that teachers needed to be more involved in seeing the process, because people will not try things if they have not seen them successfully implemented. Based on the research done, administration and support staff working closely with the office took more ownership for the vision and for fulfilling that vision. During the time of research, I noted that generally the teachers put substantial onus on administration for selling the vision to teachers, for modelling the vision for teachers, for leading teachers to use restorative approaches, and for ultimately fulfilling the vision (Field Notes, May 5, 2016).

Theme #3: Training: Leadership Investing in a Restorative Foundation

The principal, Ms. Amherst, spoke to the importance of investing in training sessions for staff and how training was integral to developing a restorative culture:

It [restorative practices] took a long time, and a lot of training, and a lot of money... this is something that I think is one of the most important things, to have a good climate, because without a good climate nobody is learning anything. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

She recognized the need to change staff perceptions of restorative practices, combatting views like: “What is this?... Are we holding hands and singing Kumbaya?... Kids need to be suspended if they do bad things” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Early in the process, a few staff members went in groups to partake in formal restorative practice training, and Ms. Amherst viewed that the experience was valuable in terms of staff understanding restorative practices. Later, trainers were brought into the school to conduct school-wide training with staff members. This section examines the investment that went into training, what was successful and what was not, and the value and resources that the school community took from the training as a part of the culture change process.

Making the Investment

Support staff member, Mr. Devine, recognized the investment—in terms of both time and money—that was necessary to get through the rough spots so the staff could progress in their restorative knowledge. A key investment he cited was release time of four days during school hours to participate in training. He stated that Ms. Amherst provided “all the professional development and tools that people need to understand and implement restorative practices in their classrooms to make it part of the daily fabric of school life” (Interview, April 14, 2016). While Ms. Amherst sought as many resources as possible, the limitation of funds impacted the ability to train everyone initially and then to invest in further education later. A concern of Ms. Amherst was the lack of funds that existed in the school board for further training at her school, due to the investment that has already been made in her school: The school board wanted to distribute funding amongst other schools. This impacted the ability of leadership at the school to maintain

the culture that existed through keeping staff refreshed, providing new techniques, and keeping restorative practices at the front of their minds:

As far as I am concerned, you don't keep things going. It's like getting an oil change in your car... you get an oil change, but then you have to get another one. We have new people coming on who are not trained. They still sort of subscribe to that philosophy, but I would really like them to have the formal training. I have spoken to superintendents and the head of mental health at the board, who all agree that it is a bad idea to stop the training, but they also don't have a solution because there are schools that have nobody trained. I don't begrudge them for limiting those spots. I just think they should be making more spots and including our staff, or giving us more money so that we can run the training ourselves.

(Interview, April 26, 2016)

Timing of Training

A teacher, a support staff member, and the principal commented on the timing of training. While the content of the training was important, the foundation and the timing were critical. Mr. Gardiner expressed that a school needed to be ready for introducing restorative practices. "If you've got a positive, constructive culture... it is probably a lot easier to get in there [with restorative practices]" (Interview, May 24, 2016). Mr. Carter considered the long-term staff at the school and how introducing a new philosophy challenged how they viewed their practice, potentially challenging what they saw as the common culture. Ms. Amherst wished that the training had been done earlier with the staff, as the training was the tipping point for gaining momentum in the school, adding, "any idea proposed at the wrong time is a bad idea" (Interview, April 26, 2016).

The Trainer

The training that Ms. Amherst described as a *tipping point* was also evident to the staff who participated. Two support staff members and two teachers appreciated that the trainer was formally an educator and that she spoke of how she had implemented restorative practices as a teacher in the classroom, all the way to working with restorative practices as a superintendent. Ms. Frieze recalled the training session:

She came with a lot of relevant examples and... the examples she used made you believe that it could work, and I remember that she made it very practical, and when she came to our school... our staff is sometimes resistant to change and sometimes resistant to new ideas and professional development. It's the only speaker that we ever had here that had the room. She was very engaging and she had immediate respect, mainly because she talked about her background. She had a background as a classroom teacher all the way to superintendent. And you could tell that she practices what she preached. I remember the wow moment that I got from the PD was don't ask the child "why?" because people can't explain why. I use that in my own parenting now. I always try to say, "what happened?" as opposed to "why did you do this?" (Interview, May 30, 2016)

She also recalled the "huge impact" (Interview, May 30, 2016) that the trainer had on the staff as she watched perceptions change throughout the day. From digging in their heels in the morning, to bright eyes and light bulbs going on in the afternoon, staff did a 180-degree shift in their views of restorative practices. Ms. Frieze added, "When you relate things with adults back to adults, and they see that a kid's perspective might be the same way...they are like, 'huh... oh my gosh...Okay'" (Interview, May 30, 2016). Support

staff member, Mr. Devine, also expressed how his colleagues were willing to listen to another educator as opposed to their administrator. “Sometimes I feel like teachers feel like administration are just, you know, doing this *to* me, as opposed to doing it to help” (Interview, April 14, 2016). The trainer’s ability to speak from experience with concrete examples spoke to the staff members in the room. For Ms. Amherst, watching the light bulbs go on, and watching the staff “get it” (Interview, April 26, 2016) was encouraging. At the end of the day, even those who thought it was a terrible idea were ready to invest more time and energy into restorative approaches. She was delighted with how this investment contributed to the restorative culture vision she was seeking to establish.

Amount of Training

Staff articulated how they had received varied amounts of training and how this impacted the ability of their colleagues to apply restorative approaches. Ms. Ennie expressed the need for everyone to be trained and to create a whole-school approach in order to establish a restorative climate. Nevertheless, Ms. Knight conveyed concern for the ideal of everyone being trained:

I think it’s a little problematic in the sense that our staff is always changing, so we have staff who have gone through the training, and who have been here for the last few years, but we have a great number of staff who are new, who haven’t been through that process, who haven’t been through the training... so I find that it is really difficult to adopt that philosophy as a school-wide philosophy, because there are some people who are aware and some who aren’t. And that is always going to happen because teaching is transient... people are in and out. So, it is

very hard to establish that at a school of this size, I think. (Interview, May 31, 2016)

The amount of training of staff varied greatly. Some staff members had participated in several sessions and workshops, including a four-day intensive training session that included certification for facilitating formal restorative circles. Others had completed a single day of training. Furthermore, the majority of the staff members had not participated in a formal restorative practices training session in over 2 years. Mr. Hutchison expressed that he felt limited in his knowledge of restorative practices and that much of his knowledge was secondhand, listening to stories from other staff about what happened in formal restorative conferences at the school. Mr. Gardiner told how he had no formal training and that his knowledge came from chatting with peers about circles and other restorative processes or from in-sessions that occurred during staff meetings. Ms. Ennie, brought in after the formal training, conveyed her desire to participate in formal training to support her work with students and circles: “I would love to have gone to one [training session]. I have gotten some things to read that people give me, but at the same time I feel like I need some actual training in it. That would definitely help” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Underlying the need for more training was a narrative that training was the sole means by which staff could become more competent in the use of restorative practices. While staff members acknowledged that they learned from others, I noted during the research that many staff members did not see this as a viable or legitimate way to increase their personal understanding of restorative practices (Field Notes, May 5, 2016).

The necessity for more training was evident across the staff. Ms. Lewis, an advocate of restorative practices, expressed that she needed a refresher and to be inspired again: “I feel like I am losing it a bit this year. My kids don’t get it as much. It’s just... I don’t know. I used it a lot in like the past two years, but...” (Interview, June 7, 2016). Ms. Ennie recalled trying to run a circle without training and how the circle did not go well. She noted that there were staff that were not interested in restorative practices, but she also noted that some staff had never been exposed to it or trained in it. They think that students “get off” (Interview, May 4, 2016) too easy, but she also remarked that they were speaking from a lack of knowledge which may lead to fear or resistance of restorative processes. She believed their perception might change if they were provided effective training. Vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, had participated in circles in the past, but after training he recalled that “it just reinforced to me that the restorative mindset is the way to go” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Ms. Amherst expressed how the momentum led into educating parents, educating feeder schools, and creating information for visitors and new students. Following the initial training session at the school, another facilitator led a second workshop with all the staff. This workshop was not as successful, as the staff did not connect with the trainer. This resulted in decelerating the momentum that had been built up during the first all-staff session. I noted the impact that a single trainer could have on a culture, both positively and negatively (Field notes, April 26, 2016).

The Value of the Training

Three support staff members, two teachers, and an administrator recalled why the training was valuable and how it influenced their classrooms. Ms. Frieze suggested that the training took her to a place where she would not have gone on her own, helping her to

understand how circles could empower an entire classroom: “I totally understand the philosophy behind being a coach and working with students and all of that, but I never understood the power.... Sitting in a circle with you sitting with them” (Interview, May 30, 2016). She added that she witnessed colleagues using restorative practices in their classrooms, who she thought never would:

I really thought, “wow, I never thought I would see that individual embracing this and trying to build community in their [sic] classroom, and trying to restore when something happens in their classroom community and stuff.” It was really surprising. (Interview, May 30, 2016)

Mr. Gardiner believed that even the informal training that he acquired from colleagues and from the resources he was given changed how he looked at schooling and what schooling was about. His focus changed from content to helping the efficacy of students and their mindset toward accomplishing goals. Ms. Knight expressed how she saw practical applications in both the restorative questions¹ and in the community building. She also appreciated that the training demonstrated that students “have to face up to the music” (Interview, May 31, 2016) in conflict situations. Mr. Devine expressed how the restorative questions that he learned in training provided a starting point for working with students:

¹ As mentioned previously, the *restorative questions* (Wachtel, 2012, p. 7) as stated by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) are a foundation for establishing restorative dialogue when responding to conflict. The questions are:

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Quite frankly, in the beginning, I didn't know what I was going to do. I felt uncomfortable, I felt uneasy. I wasn't sure of my decisions... if I was doing the right things. And then I sort of felt that, "OK, I have this training... I am going to try it and I am going to use it." And it helped me to talk to kids... I think it is easier to just talk, but sometimes if you are not used to investigating a situation or figuring out what is going on, you might not have all of the right questions to ask, and you might miss something. And I sort of felt that going back to those basic questions really helped me to find truth in situations, and helped me to help kids who might have been bullied, or might have been negatively affected by someone else, and so I sort of felt that all of that helped me do my job. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

Mr. Baccus appreciated the role-playing offered by the training and the ability to step into another's shoes as he experienced being the *victim*, the *accused*, and the *facilitator*² in conflict situations. Finally, Mr. Carter explained how restorative practices came to life in the training as he absorbed the content: "I've gone over the resources in the books, but nothing really stimulated me or made it clear for me the way the training did" (Interview, March 30, 2016). The role of the restorative questions and circles will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

² *Victim*, *accuser*, and *facilitator* are terms often used in formal restorative circles. While this language is used by some when referring to restorative practices, many are uncomfortable with the terms victim and accuser, as in conflict situations it is not always clear who the accuser is and who the victim is. In a formal conference, the facilitator seeks to facilitate dialogue amongst those involved in the conflict and other community members about the incident of conflict.

Resources

While the training occurred more than 3 years ago, resources for implementing restorative practices and for dialoguing were evident throughout the school. Ms. Amherst's office displayed an International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) relational domains poster and the restorative questions (Field Notes, March 29, 2016). Staff also spoke of how they continued to use the resources they were provided. Mr. Gardiner appreciated the small business card with the restorative questions, describing them as "part of the program that allowed kids to sort of not get away with 'I don't know'" (Interview, May 24, 2016). Many staff carried these cards in their pockets or displayed them in their offices. Some used them regularly, and others had them left over from training and rarely looked at them (Field Notes, April 6, 2016). Mr. Devine still used the books provided when preparing for circles to construct questions that addressed the needs of a given classroom. Ms. Knight expressed how the handbooks provided information for the foundational work required to conduct a safe circle. She added that the best resources the school had were colleagues who had been trained, for having staff you could speak to about issues and who could support you with issues was critical for success. In being exposed to more and more restorative approaches, Mr. Devine became an advocate for restorative practices amongst his peers, stating: "You know, as I saw those things and those benefits, I definitely became more and more involved in promoting that to other staff" (Interview, April 14, 2016). Mr. Baccus reinforced the importance of having people on your staff to support you: "And we have that... the best resource we have is ourselves. Textbooks and stuff can take you so far, but more often than not it is just that conversation, which is the best guide to the restorative process" (Interview, April

6, 2016). I noted that the sentiments expressed here by administration and support staff, speaking to colleagues as valuable resources for building restorative culture, appeared to contrast with statements by other staff members who felt that more training was the key to moving forward with restorative practices (Field Notes, June 6, 2017). The next section examines how questions, dialogue, and circles are the underpinning for leading a community through restorative practices.

Theme #4: Questions, Dialogue, and Circles: The Heart of Restorative Practices

From the outset of the research, it was apparent that *dialogue* was a critical component of the culture of the school and a key component in how people employed restorative practices. This section examines the need for dialogue, how leadership employed dialogue to change school culture, attributes of dialogue that make it valuable, forms of dialogue connected to restorative practices, circles, and learning, and what is required for continued success of dialogic techniques in schools. This section addresses how dialogue was a part of the process of leading restorative culture change and how restorative practices were reflected in the school culture.

A Need to Dialogue.

Support staff at the school were particularly passionate about the need for dialogue in their school. Mr. Devine stated that it was essential for members of the school community to talk about things. He added that a culture needed to be created where all people in the school—students and staff—could speak honestly about things that had happened, even if that meant speaking about doing wrong or wronging others. Ms. Ennie emphasized that honesty required affirming what students were saying. “A lot of them [students], I think they felt like, ‘O you don’t care. It doesn’t matter what I think’”

(Interview, May 4, 2016). Validating their pain told them that they mattered, and this resulted in students proactively seeking out adults to speak with them. Ms. Lewis spoke to her passion for dialoguing in class: “You deny them so much if you don’t communicate” (Interview, June 7, 2016). She explained that dialogue allowed students to know and to understand other students. Furthermore, dialogue enabled students to ask questions and let them know that it was OK to ask hard questions. She believed communication resulted in knowledge, and knowledge was important, for “the more you know, the better you can handle different situations” (Interview, June 7, 2016).

Students expressed the value they saw in dialogue. Safia spoke to how speaking in a circle helped to focus the discussion around a single topic and that providing everyone the opportunity to speak allowed people in the group to help each other. Rania expressed that sitting in a circle provided a shared sense that it was OK to talk and to help other students out. Finally, Nasir expressed the value of creating situations where, when you talk, other students or your teacher talk back to you. This helped him to trust others.

Mr. Carter articulated how he has seen communication change among adolescents over the past 5 years, explaining that social media had had a tremendous impact on this, for communication in social media was generally one way, whereby students make strong statements or post images and await immediate gratification. About today’s students, he stated: “they are not listening as much... it’s not a fluid conversation” (Interview, March 30, 2016). In naming the change, Mr. Carter expressed,

I feel that 5 years ago, students were still a little more versed at speaking with adults, saying, “hi sir”, or “good morning,” whether talking with their friends or parents... general adults around the way. I feel like that established a general

protocol for how you speak to people. I feel like now, that most of their interactions are unfiltered and unmonitored... the norm has changed so much.

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

He explained the result was students creating a provocative online identity where they were posturing as someone they were not. He feared that students did not know they were children, as they use the prerogative provided by social media to express themselves freely, sometimes in vulgar ways. He believed this resulted in hurt, traumatizing experiences, problems with self-doubt, self-identity crises, and bullying. Mr. Carter pronounced that adults in schools need to *interfere*, to engage in conversation and lead students in how to dialogue, for society is moving away from face-to-face interactions. Following the interview, I noted that with less face-to-face interactions because of social media, the opportunities for adults to engage in dialogue with students are becoming fewer (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

Ms. Ennie stressed the importance of students understanding that their opinion was important, but also that the opinions of others were important, and that “we give each other that space to talk and to be valued” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Mr. Carter desired that students would share their voices on issues that were meaningful for adolescents, but that needed to be done in the context of leading students to understand how to speak and how to respond when communicating with others. Ms. Lewis emphasized to her students how much information was lost when individuals did not communicate: “We have to be able to see both sides, and if you can’t, chances are what you were thinking about why you did something is not actually what the other person was thinking about why they did it” (Interview, June 7, 2016). She would lead her students to understand that judging one

side of a situation generally was not effective. While she believed some students grasped onto this, other students appeared not to. Ultimately, she hoped that it provided a foundation for students to communicate effectively, whether that occurred during dialogues she led or during future dialogues.

Leading for a Culture of Dialogue.

Ms. Amherst described some of her strategies for creating a culture of communication amongst members of the school community. She explained that circles and community building were the foundation of the culture change seen at the school. She spoke to how she worked with the vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, and other support staff on her leadership team as they worked through how restorative practices could intentionally be employed for responding to concerns. She described a scenario where there was an uncommon occurrence of three fights taking place over a 2-week period. The leadership team decided to have circles in all the classes in order to ask students why this might be happening. Ms. Amherst described the dialogue with her staff:

We said [to the teachers], “If you as a teacher don’t feel comfortable running a circle, the [support person] will help... the guidance person will help... someone who has been trained will help.” And so everybody kind of went... even people who didn’t buy in at first were sort of saying, “Well, I kind of don’t have a choice here, because they’ve offered someone to help me if I don’t want to do it.” And out of that came some really amazing insights from the students. People would come—not necessarily talk to me, but to their colleagues and stuff—and let me know that, “This was powerful. This was huge.” Kids were coming out and saying, “I don’t like that this is happening.” We were then able to target certain

areas for duty, get more people in those areas. I know a lot of people came on board with that. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

She stressed that sometimes staff needed to be pushed, but the hope was that by modelling and through staff experiencing success, they would come on board with the circles. I reflected on the need for leadership to lead, as this scenario spoke to taking staff where they would not go on their own (Field notes, April 26, 2016). Providing a consistent structure for both staff and students was cited by the principal, Ms. Amherst, as important for maintaining the restorative culture amongst the school community. She expressed that students knew that “whatever has gone wrong is going to be made right through the same process that happens all the time” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She explained that when students knew the restorative questions that were coming, the students had answers prepared before the questions came out.

Ms. Amherst’s hope was that circles were used regularly in classes, though she also recognized that frequency varied anywhere from daily to weekly, or even monthly. Interviews and the student focus group confirmed that circles varied from almost daily to classes with no circles at all. In the circle structure, students knew that they would have a voice in class. Likewise, in incidents of wrongdoing, students knew they would be able to share their side of the story. Ms. Amherst explained that students sent to the office by a teacher did so with a sheet. The sheet served several functions: Both students and staff could tell their stories, the restorative process was initiated with a concrete measure to uphold accountability, and the sheet provided a window of time for responding rather than necessitating an immediate response (Document; Journal, April 27, 2017).

Mr. Baccus appreciated how the circle process—both formal and informal—brought structure to dialogue between members of the school community:

It formalized the process a little more and I think it just puts structure to the process as opposed to just randomly talking. More often than not, sometimes kids just talk to each other and it might get out of hand. (Interview, April 6, 2016)

He believed that the circle allowed conflict situations to be handled by larger groups, for the structure reduced randomness, allowing for constructive conversation.

Support staff member, Mr. Carter, who worked with students who were sent to the office by teachers, valued the importance of dialogue as part of the structure:

When they call me and a student has to come down, it's not like he has to stay with you for the rest of the period or the rest of the day. It's like, "Here's what happened... can you talk to him?" That's huge! Some people might say that talking doesn't do anything, or that talking is the easy way out. The fact that they are acknowledging how important that piece is... that conversation piece... I think they're trusting it. Even if that is not what they prefer, they know that's how it is. So even if it's reluctantly, they are trusting it, they are giving in, submitting a little bit ... in a positive way. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He expressed the value of students being engaged in a restorative way every time they came to the office, for even if the teacher does not experience the whole process, the student experienced a conversation. Through this process, the student was able to express her or his feelings, and then Mr. Carter could initiate a conversation between the student and the teacher so the teacher could join the conversation and express his or her feelings.

The restorative structure became a norm for the student, even if this was not always the culture experienced in the classroom.

While Mr. Carter valued circles and the circles process, he had experienced a decline in the number of circles that staff requested for their classrooms over the past couple of years. He was unsure of the reason for this, thinking it could be because people were more confident in their ability to respond to conflict, or it could be that teachers felt that asking another staff member to come in was an infringement on her/his autonomy in the classroom. He did note that he was more likely to be called in when teachers were not able to respond to conflict on their own. More often than not, he was called in for reactive reasons rather than proactive ones. There was much less inclination for staff members to bring in people for the proactive purpose of strengthening the classroom community.

Ms. Amherst's hope was that the structure created for the school supported staff members and students in building school community. "Everything from the way that I structure the timetable, to the training I give my staff, is involved in that building of the community" (Interview, April 26, 2016). She believed the foundation of *building communities in classrooms* and throughout the school was "the basis for everything in the school."

Community Building

Staff members throughout the school valued restorative practices as a means of building community. Ms. Knight valued the proactive nature of bringing students together. She expressed how using a circle to talk about events in the classroom or current events in society, if used frequently enough, brought students together and allowed students and the teacher to get to know each other. While he admitted to not

often employing restorative practices himself, Mr. Hutchison spoke to how one of his colleagues used restorative practices to give students a voice as they communicated about their highs and lows of the week as a class: "... it really builds a really nice community within her classroom. I think that there are good things that come from parts of the restorative sort of practices idea or concept" (Interview, May 24, 2016). Ms. Knight worked with different students and different classes throughout the day and wished she had her own homeroom to implement circles with. She recalled when she had her own classroom and stated, "It would really have affected the way I lead my class, because I really, really do enjoy the circles for classroom community building" (Interview, May 31, 2016). Ms. Amherst articulated that community building is critical with adolescents, for having a voice and being heard established the basis for all their relationships. Ms. Frieze valued the community building that took place through circles and dialogue, whether it be for community building or for reflecting on conflict situations. She told a story of a student who took another student's tablet and changed the password. Using the language of *what happened?* and *how did this affect you?* she was able to lead the student through dialogue that resolved the issue quickly and effectively. The questions supported the student in taking ownership of her/his actions (Field note, May 30, 2016).

Attributes of Dialogue

In speaking to the importance of communication and dialogue, members of the school community articulated many attributes of dialogue that are important for effective dialogue to be present. These attributes included voice, listening, safety, and equality.

Voice. Staff and students expressed varied reasons that voice was important. Ms. Frieze believed that giving students a voice reduced problems. Voice meant that students

were heard, and students who knew they were heard were willing to share. She recalled a time when she gave each of her students a voice: “I felt that my connections with those students that I never had a connection with, was there” (Interview, May 30, 2016). She added that quieter voices, voices not normally heard in class, were now heard. A student, Parelle, shared how he appreciated having a voice in circles because you could speak to the whole class. He shared a story of a student who was hitting other students on the arms with his ruler: “And we talked about why he was doing this, and what we could do to help him stop doing this, and what happened, and if it kept happening” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Parelle said the dialogue created some change in the individual, though eventually the student was removed from his class, so he was unable to speak to the long-term effects of the classroom conversation.

Mr. Carter articulated that providing someone with a voice increased their *credibility*, for the audience changed their stigmatized or stereotyped identity of the individual who spoke. Rather than grouping individuals in cliques such as athletes, religious people, or comedians, he perceived that when given a voice, students were categorized based on their feelings, emotions, and insights rather than by their peer groups. He reflected, “Sometimes even for myself, when kids speak, [I think] ‘I was not expecting that to come out of your mouth, because you’ve never shown me that. You’ve never shown that, but you’ve never had the opportunity’” (Interview, March 30, 2016).

Mr. Baccus suggested that providing voice has a positive impact on his decision-making. Dialoguing about students or other concerns opens the doors to other possible options in order to address the needs of the members of the school community. “We discuss options, and I think every staff member feels like they have a say. They can give

their opinion, and they'll be heard. And some actions I have taken are a direct result of what staff have said" (Interview, April 6, 2016).

Ms. Frieze articulated how students who are quieter are placed on an equal playing field when an opportunity is provided for them to have a voice. Their voice is valued as much as that of someone who is heard on a regular basis. She added that some voices are heard often because they are in frequent conflict and end up speaking with the teacher. She reflected on a circle she participated in and how voice impacted the circle and the classroom community:

There was [sic] some things that were said...I would never have seen that perspective in that situation, and I was surprised by that perspective, but also surprised by who said it. So, you see how those people are impacted... like people that you would assume were never impacted by something... all of a sudden now, you see that perspective. Everyone in the circle sees that perspective, because it is being said. (Interview, May 30, 2016)

Mr. Baccus affirmed the need to provide everyone a voice, because voice supports the greater good. Nonetheless, he stressed that providing a voice is not helpful unless people listen. "Too many people want to talk... you gotta listen... you gotta listen" (Interview, April 6, 2016). In listening to the voices of others, Mr. Baccus believed that you earn the respect of those you are leading. Furthermore, taking time to listen forces the listener to not jump to make quick decisions. The value of listening is expounded on in the next section.

Listening. Listening was a key theme for administration, students, support staff, and teachers. Listening was a primary theme for vice-principal, Mr. Baccus. He

recognized that some people in the school community thought he listened too much, but he was ready to defend the value of listening:

Well, you know what... in my judgement I let it go as long as I think is worthwhile. You can't let that [people complaining about listening too much] change you... but I listen as long as I think I need to listen, and then make a decision once it needs to be made. (Interview, April 6, 2016)

He expressed that part of the value of listening was hearing all sides of a story and not taking sides, for he desired to listen and not to judge. He stressed the need to give every kid a voice and to listen to her/his story. He believed this could change the child, but also modelled to staff and students how to respond to others. Generally, he supposed that everyone in the school community appreciated his focus on listening.

Ms. Amherst stressed that listening demonstrates care. One who really cares, who is truly concerned, will genuinely listen to another. In this way teachers and students are willing to bring both their joys and their concerns to another individual who listens, for they know they will care about the story. Mr. Baccus shared a story of a student who recognized how adults listen:

I had one student in particular say, "well, nobody ever listens to me, so what's the point?" And I go, "Well we listen here." And after we have a restorative conversation with [the student] and the classmates [the student] was having issues with, she said to me quite blankly, "I'm amazed... I've never been at a school where they listen to what I have to say". (Interview, April 6, 2016)

Mr. Devine stressed his desire to have students trust that he would listen every time they approached him and that he was going to act to do what was right given the situation, for

listening also requires an appropriate action. Listening is revealed to students not only in the dialogue but in the actions following the dialogue (Field Notes, April 6, 2016).

A vision for the school was that it would be a place of listening. Ms. Amherst was adamant that the school was a place where adults and peers listened to students: “So if they are upset about something, or if something is bothering them, or if they are happy about something, they always know that somebody cares to listen” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Half of the students in the focus group affirmed this sentiment, voicing the importance of listening. Hanna stated, “one of the big things a teacher can do is believe in what the student is saying so that they can listen and can give back advice toward the situation” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). This belief allowed the student to trust her teachers. Another student, Nasir, expressed a similar thought, correlating listening and trust. He believed that teachers who listen would keep information confidential, thereby reinforcing his trust for the teacher. Safia would speak to teachers who took time to patiently listen. “They just listen, and take the time to understand you. They also pay attention. They care about how you are doing. They always try to encourage you” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Ms. Ennie voiced the need for listening to be a two-way street, and that listening would not be successful unless everyone in the dialogue listened. “I am here to listen to you, you to me, but at the same time we have respect for each other. I think that is one of the things I learned through restorative practices...where everyone has a voice” (Interview, May 4, 2016). The need for equality in dialogue is critical for dialogic success.

Equality. Equality was viewed as a critical part of dialogue, and voice is a way to bring equality to the restorative process. A class was observed working in a circle. This

class used only chairs, and clipboards served as writing surfaces for their learning. Students were provided many opportunities to speak as they sat in the circle. Several students faced many challenges to their learning including language barriers and anxiety (Observations, May 18, 2016). The circle, and the opportunity to speak, provided each of them an opportunity to be the point of attention during the class and to have the opportunity for sharing his/her voice. While this did not always appear comfortable for each student, each student did speak (Observations, May 18, 2016). The teacher of this class, Ms. Morgan, believed the fact that everyone could see everyone when speaking and listening was critical to the learning process. She deemed that students were more attentive because the lack of barriers meant that all eyes were on all students. Likewise, addressing students as a whole, where every student was in a similar position, seemed easier than addressing students when some were at the front of the room and some at the back of the room. She also expressed that having a similar view of each other changed how students related to each other, for everyone was on equal terms. One day during the class, students were asked to turn their chairs forward to watch a PowerPoint presentation done by one of the students. As soon as students were asked to turn, one boy grabbed his chair and quietly darted to the back of the room to be as far away from the presentation as possible, behind all the other students (Observations, June 2, 2016). The boy's decision to move resulted in his being hidden from the focus of the room. While this impacted how the student placed him/herself physically in the class, I could not speak to how this ultimately impacted the learning (Field Notes, June 2, 2016). Mr. Baccus also recognized the equality that happens in a circle—believing that when students are all an equal distance from each other, and facing each other from the same perspective rather than

looking at the back of another student's head—and that this has a positive effect on the learning process. Ms. Frieze spoke to a story of a colleague's class:

When she was away for a period of time, an amazing teacher came in for her doing the most amazing inquiry project ever that I have seen. And they were doing this in the library, and I was watching all of this happen. The by-product was that all of these behaviours started happening; and all of these problems at recess; and all of this bullying started happening. And the only thing, when I was reflecting on this, is the circles have been removed because that teacher is not there. And all of a sudden, even though they have this super engaging rich task for the students to do: and they were into it, for sure. All of these other behaviours that have never been there this year started happening. So, that tells me that like—whether it is the circles or it's the relationships she's got with the students, or the connection—that is worth all of that time that is spent. Even though it is not curriculum based like on the report card, it is worth putting all of that energy into... They totally lost their voice. And they totally were no longer on that equal playing field. Because that is what a circle does... it makes everyone equal.

(Interview, May 30, 2016)

The story articulated not only how circles created equality, but also how circles created safety. The interplay of equality and safety is the final attribute of dialogue to be focused on.

Safety in dialogue. Mr. Carter pushed others to consider how the questions employed by teachers could create safe or unsafe environments for students to learn in.

He proposed that questions should be asked that are applicable to everyone, rather than questions that seek to catch students off guard:

The [restorative] questions are generally applicable to everyone. Instead of, “What’s the answer to number 8?” Shoot. If you don’t know it, that’s a terrible situation. If you do know it... it’s still all on you. Whereas a circle is like, “how was our weekend?” “How are we feeling about this?” “What are some ways we can come to this answer?” It’s open... I think it creates that sense of... that sense of community, and that we are all in it together. If one kid is nervous about this, another kid might share that they are nervous about this. I feel like the dialogue isn’t as internal. It’s more open, and it’s a real dialogue, right? (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He added that real dialogue results in mature conversations. A student, Safia, articulated how a teacher’s response to a student dictates how safe a student feels in the class:

I don’t really like when teachers say your name out loud in front of the whole class and say that they don’t like your behaviour in front of the classroom. I kind of think that a good response is to like, sneakily just go up to the student and then pull them out of their desk, and go in a quiet corner and talk to them about their behaviour, politely... so the student will understand they are not fighting... they are just working with you. They are trying to help you out. (Focus Group, May 27)

A second student, Hanna, expressed that a good space to learn is a safe place where a student knows that friends and peers support the ideas you share, even if you do not know the other students all that well. It was proposed by an administrator, a support staff, and a

teacher that dialogue needed to create an environment where it was safe to speak and safe to listen. Mr. Baccus had seen this impact parents. When parents were given a voice and had the opportunity to sit down to both speak and listen, they appeared to be less confrontational and approached the situation with their child with a calmer demeanour. Mr. Carter had witnessed that allowing students to be fully authentic when speaking led to openness and vulnerability. Other students reacted appropriately to that student, for they were sensitive to the emotion that came forth. Ms. Lewis also spoke to the need for people to express how they felt, for this bridged the different stories that people have who were involved in a situation: It placed everyone on the same page. Mr. Baccus observed how a place to have safe and honest dialogue impacted staff, for when the causes of underlying negativity could be expressed in a safe place, then the group could work on how to meet the needs of everyone involved and move forward. “They all had a chance to say what they felt, and it may be just for show, but since then we have not had those pet problems again” (Interview, April 6, 2016).

Incidents of safety were expressed through stories. Mr. Jackson explained how a group of students were unintentionally teasing another student in his class. These students did not believe they were impacting the other student. A circle was used so that all of the boys could speak, including the boy being “teased and tormented” (Interview, May 26, 2016). The circle allowed the boys to hear how they were impacting their classmate, to reflect on what they were doing, and to consider how their actions were resulting in grief for the other boy. “That was effective. We were able to come to an agreement at the end in terms of what the expectations would be of those four boys with regards to anybody,

not just the boy that was involved” (Interview, May 26, 2016). Again, everyone could move forward with their dignity upheld.

Mr. Carter explained how students were involved in resolving a conflict between two students who were not seeing eye-to-eye. When he led the restorative circle he wanted to not only support the students in conflict but also to have the students understand that they could play a role in either supporting others or ostracizing others through peer pressure:

We did the fishbowl [a circle with people in an inner circle, and people in an outer circle] ... put them back to back. These kids are in grade six... some of them age 12, most are probably 11. To see their peers give feedback, to really step up and be mature. And to see these guys... they did not like each other at say, 10 o'clock. By 10:15 they are like, “You know what, ...I shouldn't have done this,” and they apologized and forgave each other. Does that mean it is going to be over? Hopefully, but maybe not... but that is a huge step. The fact that these students who aren't restorative trained, they were able to adopt a restorative mindset: practice it, give feedback, watch it work... and at the end they clapped! I was like... “this is amazing.” (Interview, March 30, 2016)

I noted that placing students in a situation that was supported by quality questions and that allowed safe dialogue provided a medium for an effective circle (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

Restorative Dialogic Structures.

Through the research, it became evident that dialogue was integral to implementing restorative practices. The following addresses two forms of structures for

dialogue common to restorative practices and that reveal the use of restorative practices: *circles* and the *restorative questions*.

Circles. When speaking to students about restorative practices, the single thing they most commonly correlated with restorative practices was circles (Field Notes, April 27, 2016). Five of the six students spoke to how they saw circles benefiting the culture of the school. Nasir appreciated circles because they allowed students to see what other students were feeling. He added that a circle “actually changes how you interact with other students and teachers” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Omar communicated how circles were important for student reflection:

I personally think circles are a very good tool for introspection—if I may use the word—because I think that people really get to know themselves when they get to do circles, and they get to know others, especially regarding emotions, thoughts, behaviours. I really think it is sad though that many people don’t like circles, because it is actually like a common occurrence, in my class at least. Sometimes, I guess they just don’t like it for the reason that sometime people don’t like to open up. But personally, my belief is that circles are beneficial. (Focus Group, April 27, 2016)

The importance of circles for getting to know everyone in your class was central to Hanna’s perspective of circles. She expressed how circles allowed everyone in a class to open up and to share ideas and feelings. She added that it was common to not know everyone in your class, but that the circle created a safe environment for students to share their views. She believed that without the structure of the circle, students were more fearful of sharing and potentially offending a classmate. Rania focused on how circles

allowed students and the teacher to know where each other was at emotionally. Knowing where a person was at allowed others to see them in a different light. This resulted in sympathy and treating the person with care. The student believed, “We build walls around ourselves, we lie... It’s human nature, but I think when we all sit down, we have this shared sense that it is OK to talk, and we are all here to help each other out” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). She added that sitting in a circle placed everyone in the class “on the same team.” The student recalled a class where they would sit in a circle and the teacher would ask, “So how is your day going?” Using an expandable ball (a Hoberman Sphere), each student would share how they were feeling. If the ball was expanded, a student was doing well; if the ball was scrunched up, a student was not doing so well. Again, students had a view inside their classmates and their teacher and how they were feeling, even without verbal communication; even without verbal dialogue, space was created to provide a voice into one’s state of mind. Regarding this circle, the student explained, “Stuff like that, it really made us feel connected to each other because we could really see into each other. It’s not like there was a façade around us or a wall built up... it was just ... us” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Safia continued the conversation on circles around the concept of feelings. She added that the circle takes a class from being insecure to secure, because you feel like a close community. “You can see the people differently in a more positive way. I am not saying that they are not positive, but it is more positive” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). She also spoke to the importance of using circles for responding to conflict at the school. She described how on the day she was interviewed her class had used a circle to address bullying in the school. The circle made her aware of situations she was not aware of before:

I don't actually see bullying here. Like when I heard them say it happened here, I never actually knew that there was any bullying in the school, because they take it very seriously here. So today we sat in a circle and started talking about these things... we all got to interact together. It is like a little community... a little classroom all together. (Focus Group, April 27, 2016)

Circles and learning. Two teachers and a support staff member spoke to how circles impacted formal learning in classroom cultures. Mr. Devine appreciated how the physical formation of a circle allowed for great conversations. While circles served to help students know each other and their feelings, circles also served curricular needs: "Everyone is included, and everyone is facing each other, and you can share that way" (Interview, April 14, 2016). He would use the circle for responses to videos and for facilitating discussion. Likewise, he would provide students with an image and have students share how the image connected to something they learned about, or sometimes they would connect the image to their feelings. Ms. Knight appreciated how she has seen colleagues use circles for reviewing course content and exploring new concepts. "Kids seem far more engaged when you are in that circle format" (Interview, May 31, 2016). She added that the circle put students in a position where they were forced to be thinking and thereby adding to the discussion. In her own work, Ms. Knight works mostly with smaller groups of students as they seek to learn a new language. Small circles worked well for encouraging students to share in the new language, for it seemed to be a natural setting for sharing and listening.

Mr. Jackson explained that he used circles daily with his teaching partner. Working with small groups, the teachers facilitated circles to clarify details regarding the

day or regarding classwork in order for students to be on the same page with expectations. This teaching pair also used circles for teaching students social protocols, using circles to help students understand how they could work together, and how to be together in ways that supported the people around them. He saw students learning the skills to work through issues on their own. Ms. Frieze also expressed how she had used circles in the past to address social issues that happened on the playground at lunch. Circles would be used after lunch with the whole class or with small groups to discuss respect and inclusion. While participants often viewed circles as a tool for responding to conflict, I experienced that the circle was also being used effectively as a resource for enhancing teaching and learning in terms of both curriculum and social protocols (Field Notes, May 31, 2016).

Ms. Lewis expressed that circles could be incredibly successful for achieving curricular expectations. She used circles for reading and for follow-up discussions. Nevertheless, she also described that some classes were more difficult to work with than others in the circle format. She explained how circles were dependent on organization, and some classes, depending on their needs, made having circles difficult to schedule. "...but I want to try to integrate it more in what I am doing, like just actually explicitly having more circles, and having it scheduled in" (Interview, June 7, 2016). Without scheduling circles and making them a part of the regular routine, it was difficult for both students and teachers to participate in circles on a regular basis. Furthermore, in observations it was clear that students familiar with circles were efficient at both setting the circles up and at participating in the circle process (Observations, June 2, 2016).

Circle techniques. From her interview, Ms. Lewis revealed that she had invested many hours into preparing and running circle times. She explained many techniques that she had learned for effectively running circles (Field Notes, June 7, 2016). One of her favorite topics was to ask students about their *highs and lows*, but she has learned that they needed to express highs and lows from the previous week rather than highs and lows they were expecting. A student might say that their high is their birthday in 3 weeks. “Well... it’s not really a high. We want to talk about what was the best thing that happened in your week.” She also pushed students to name a high, while expressing a low was an option. “And the kids really... they love it. Like kids came back last year... they knew I did it every afternoon, and they come back to join in our circle” (Interview, June 7, 2016). While lows are less common, she notes that when students express a low, other students will often say sorry to the student expressing the low. If students are sharing the same low, the empathy for each other can be powerful.

She talked about the need for physical space for circles, explaining that circles have been more difficult this year due to both the physical size of the classroom and the number of students in the class. She also has noticed that her boys seem to have a lot of energy this year, and the space constraints combined with the energy of the students becomes another barrier to setting up and conducting circles. It is still doable, but she has experienced that it is more difficult due to the limitations. Yet, she tries to plan a circle for the end of every day. She recognized that students still love it. Ms. Lewis expressed a story about a time that the students asked to do a circle to celebrate her birthday:

“What are you guys going to do?” I thought they were going to say something nice about each other. And they went around the circle and each said what they

appreciated about me, which was like... so thoughtful, and even this boy, who always swears at me, said the nicest thing. I was like, "they actually get it." Do you know what I mean? I didn't have to tell them. Nobody had to tell them to do it. They knew that would mean a lot to me. So, they did that all on their own. And still instead of just having a party all afternoon long, they still wanted to have a circle. I guess that would be... it was awesome. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

The need to make participation voluntary in restorative circles was stressed by Ms. Morgan. She explained that part of the success of circles is that students need to offer to speak, and they also need to have the right to refuse to speak. From her perspective, when teachers assume that students are going to partake in a circle, the teacher takes ownership away from the student. She adds that people must own why they do something or they will not be invested in it. In observations of a class, it appeared that there were students who were hesitant to speak to their class, and yet they were provided the option not to speak. While speaking aloud appeared to be easy for some, it seemed to be highly stressful for others (Observations, June 2, 2016).

Are circles used well? While both students and staff members spoke to the effectiveness of circles, there were also concerns about circles. Ms. Morgan questioned her own motives in using circles. While she desired that they would be used positively, she also admitted that sometimes she used the circles as a form of control. Observations in her classroom showed me that the circle does not let anyone hide, nor can they hide what they are doing, for sitting in a circle with only a clipboard in front of them appeared to be very vulnerable for some students (Observations, May 18, 2016). I noted Ms. Morgan's comments regarding circles as a form of control and how circles can serve as a

method whereby the teacher can watch students all of the time (Field Notes, May 19, 2016). The same teacher expressed her concern that circles, when used ineffectively for responses to behaviour, can give restorative practices a bad name. She expressed that students are not always exposed to a full process that gives everyone a voice and that allows everyone to listen. This negatively affects the student and the practice, ultimately impacting the restorative culture that people are working to instill in the school. Ms. Frieze told a story of a circle that went awry:

There was a circle done earlier this year with a class that I teach, but I didn't participate in the circle because of...timetabling, I guess. Which is another time factor, right? So the circle, the first circle they did to deal with some classroom issues was OK, and it was led by [name] who did a great job leading it and everything that came out of it was great. The classroom teacher was not in the circle. The students shared all of their views and in the beginning their voice was valued, but because the classroom teacher wasn't there no changes took place in the classroom. So, either whether it was that the voices weren't heard by the classroom teacher or because the classroom... either the classroom teacher didn't know about it, because she wasn't there or the classroom teacher didn't implement it, 'cause she heard about it... I don't know what it is. No changes happened outside of the circle about the concerns that were raised. So then they had another circle and the students started to complain. "Why do we need to keep doing these circles? We don't want to do these circles," which I was surprised about, because I have never had a group of students complain about circles. Usually students usually want the circles. So, I am just inferring here: that it is

because they didn't... there was two things happening. One was, whatever they said in the circle didn't get addressed anyways, so what is the point? And then, number two, is there's this stigma. They are like, "Why are we the class that always have [sic] to have circles? Why does he have to come and lead this circle again? Like we are tired of doing this." Like that is where it falls. Whatever gets raised...like those voices have to be valued and then change has to occur, otherwise, what is the point? (Interview, May 30, 2016).

Ms. Frieze reckoned that when the circle became a burden to the students rather than a benefit, then the practice of being restorative ceased to be effective, for students likely interpreted this restorative practice as not being in their best interests. In fact, she noted that the process either had no effect or possibly resulted in harm for the students. The result is that the students had little to no desire to continue to participate in the practice that was supposed to uphold their best interests and rights.

Restorative questions. The restorative questions are a dialogic structure common to restorative practices. The questions are employed for leading students through conversations. It was previously mentioned during the training theme how Mr. Devine used these questions as a starting point for dialogue when he was unsure of where to start. When teachers, students, support staff members, or administrators came together, the restorative questions ensured that conversation was more structured, because everyone knew what questions were coming. Ms. Knight described how the questions changed how she would address an incident. "That whole temptation to ask, '*Why* would you do that?' In the training you don't ask 'why?', you ask 'What happened?' You give them a chance to tell their story." She also shared how asking "What?" instead of "Why?" changed her

approach to students. “Sometimes things happen. I always say...you know... ‘What happened?’ ‘How were you feeling?’ ‘How did this impact someone else?’... and ‘What can you do next time?’ I use those questions on a daily basis” (Interview, May 31, 2016). She added that she has a support staff member who always encourages her to create good questions, especially the final questions in a circle. A question like, “How can we move forward?” ends the dialogue on a positive note. I noted how effective questions are required for effective answers (Field Notes, June 1, 2016).

Believing in the Dialogic Process

It was stressed by staff members that people need to use the restorative process, model the process, and maintain the process. Mr. Devine observed how some people became frustrated with the restorative process because it does not always bring about complete resolution. Without complete resolution, some of his colleagues deemed the whole process to be a failure. In addition, they believed too much time was wasted. He stressed that a circle that has gone well does not mean there is not more work to be done. “But I think sometimes you need to persist through these issues and get people to work on them, ‘cause it’s not always...it’s not always clean cut at the end” (Interview, April 14, 2016). Ms. Lewis stressed the need to see change not necessarily in the immediate, but with a vision for the long term. Students may not observe, recognize, or experience the benefit of circles in the short term, but the vision needs to go beyond the short-term interests of the individuals involved. “I think they’ll appreciate it when they get to grade 9 or 10, and say, ‘Do you remember when <name> used to do circles?’ That will come back again, and they’ll remember that” (Interview, June 7, 2016). Mr. Carter was

adamant about the need for more circles. When asked what the school needs to do to move forward with restorative practices, he stated:

I'd just like to see more circles being implemented, whether I am facilitating them or whether they are happening in the class. I think it just takes so much pressure off the kids. I think it takes so much pressure off the staff. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He stressed the need for more opportunities to converse eye-to-eye so that students learned to be comfortable with each other, honest with each other, and open to the ideas of those around them.

Theme #5: Restorative Responses to Conflict

The interview process revealed that an integral aspect of the training for staff members was the concept of consequences. Every adult interviewed spoke to the concept of consequences, but the concept had different connotations for different staff members and how they understand and employ restorative practices for responding to conflict. The concept of consequences can be divided into two camps. The first camp spoke to consequences as a means of *accountability and responsibility*, whereas the second camp viewed consequences as a means of *sending a message* to prevent students from repeating their actions. This section examines the correlation and polarities of these two perspectives. This is followed by further attributes of effective responses to conflict including consistency, fairness, and leading the restorative process.

Consequences as Responsibility and Accountability

Accountability was a major theme for the principal of the school, stating that one of her major draws toward restorative practices was the importance of accountability for

adolescents. When new students entered the building, Ms. Amherst emphasized the need for students to be accountable in order to be successful at the school. She did not want failure to be an option for students, holding students accountable for their academics, for their behaviour, for building a school community, for their own actions, and for the actions of others. The belief was that if everyone was accountable to the community, when conflict occurred there was a structure that allowed students to return to the community, for everyone was a part of building each other up:

We talk to them about everything from, “You are accountable to your actions and you are accountable for actions of others in that you accept behaviour that belongs in the school that you want to build.” For example, we always talk about... we don’t necessarily have an antibullying program because we teach the kids, “You are a part of a community, and if you accept somebody treating somebody else poorly, then you are accepting that it is OK at your school.” And so the kids don’t accept that behaviour from each other. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

Ms. Amherst spoke to accountability not just for students but also for adults in the school community. Teachers are encouraged to be accountable to students, or to *own their kids*. As mentioned previously, timetabling was changed so students worked with fewer teachers in a day. The intention of this was to help students to build stronger relationships with teachers. She added, “We know with adolescents that a deep relationship with a caring adult is key in their development and their emotional well-being and mental health... so we know that can make a huge difference” (Interview, April 26, 2016). The owning of students also enabled parents to communicate with a single individual who knows the student and works with the parents’ child more often. Ownership is intended to

strengthen the student–teacher relationship, ultimately benefiting the learning of the student and the ability of the teacher to teach.

While accountability and responsibility were viewed as important, it was also recognized that not everyone was on the same page. Mr. Carter voiced that a portion of the staff sought to uphold the ideal of having students be responsible and accountable for their actions and desired to work with students to support them in this process. Mr. Devine stressed the importance of responsibility in restorative practices, and that the power of the practice was having individuals seek to right the wrongs they had done. At the same time, he recognized that the process was not easy, nor simple. Part of the complexity was the battle against societal culture. He stated:

In North American cultures or Western European cultures, that’s the way we have always done it. If you do something bad, you get punished and you move on. But I don’t think there’s the emphasis on taking responsibility and making it right, which to me is much more powerful, and I feel like that is what most people want most of the time anyways. They don’t want you to just say you’re sorry...but that you actually are, and that you feel bad about it, and that you want to do better next time. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

He recognized that there were always consequences to actions, but his main concern was, “Does the individual feel sorry for his or her actions?” (Interview, April 14, 2016). If not, he found this to be most concerning. He viewed that experiencing shame and sorrow for one’s actions as the primary reason for a student desiring to move forward, rather than the consequences. Likewise, Ms. Frieze explained a story of a student who stole several things at the school. She was frustrated that a circle was not used to address the student,

for she felt a circle would have provided an opportunity for the student to show remorse. When she addressed the student about his actions he retorted, “I wrote a letter to <name>... I don’t know what else you want from me” (Interview, May 30, 2016). She yearned for the student to have an opportunity to understand how his actions had impacted others, to provide a context for the student to feel remorse, and to seek to make changes in the future. Without this opportunity, she felt the student was denied the chance to step into another’s shoes and to understand how she/he impacted others.

Consequence as part of restorative practices. Staff members would refer directly or indirectly back to the first all-school training sessions to speak to the need for consequences in restorative practices. Ms. Knight believed that a key part of the buy-in that occurred during training was a result of the need for consequences when being restorative, explaining that the restorative process was always in combination with consequences:

She [the trainer] was really good about explaining how this is a tool, but that it is always in combination with a consequence. This is part of the consequence, but there is usually a need for another consequence. ‘Cause a lot of people were not buying in because they thought this was too wishy-washy, a hug and a cookie thing. “So we are just going to talk about what happened, but there will be no consequence?” But she talked a lot about situations that happened when she was a vice-principal and a principal that were... “no, like we lead this circle, but there was a consequence...the kid was suspended.” (Interview, May 31, 2016)

Ms. Frieze also recalled consequences from the training, but had a different perspective. She observed that some people believe that the restorative circle had trumped

consequences, yet she recalled from the training, “If restorative practices fail, then there is a consequence attached” (Interview, May 30, 2016). She advocated for a discussion led by administration with the staff to reiterate the need to have consequences still in place and to clarify how they are used. Mr. Devine iterated that the complexity comes in one’s discretion, deciding when a conflict or a misunderstanding has been resolved and whether the student felt accountable for his or her actions: “Sometimes you do a circle with a group of people, and that’s it. People are able to move on. But sometimes they do things so serious that you just can’t leave it at that” (Interview, April 14, 2016). I noted that many staff wanted a policy that would explicitly deal with every situation (Field Notes, June 1, 2016).

Accountability as a communal process. Three of the staff members spoke to how accountability becomes part of the process. Students need to be led to name how people have been harmed and how they can make things right. When students name how to make things right, they take ownership, and thus become accountable for their actions. Mr. Jackson explained that if a teacher doles out consequence, it becomes a very negative situation for the student. When the student is asked, “What do you think should actually happen to make this problem right, or make this situation better?” (Interview, May 26, 2016) then by naming the solution, the student takes responsibility. In his opinion, when a student takes ownership of a situation, he/she is much more likely to follow through with his or her proposed solution. He added that communal solutions that involve the victim’s input result in ownership for the victim too. The dialogue allows everyone involved to share their story and often results in greater sympathy and empathy. Mr. Jackson added:

There has to be some kind of consequence. And the person who is involved in the act, whatever it is that they are talking about...not only has to be part of the decision-making process, but... you know... but they have no choice but to be OK with whatever those consequences are. And oftentimes they come up with things that are way harsher than you would ever expect. Way more harsh... And I think that that in itself is... the long-term effects of that are that students will think a little bit more about their own actions, and not necessarily be doing things because they are afraid that they are going to get in trouble but doing things because it is the right thing to do. (Interview, May 26, 2016)

Mr. Carter upheld the importance of the offender being involved in co-creating the consequence, for it not only creates accountability in the situation at hand, but it also results in long-term accountability as the lesson and the conversation impact one's actions down the road. Sometimes the teacher leading the process needs to mediate the decision made by the student. Ms. Frieze explained that "sometimes they give me a really good consequence and sometimes they give me a consequence that is too harsh. And I say, 'You know what... it is not that big of a deal. Let's keep it in context'" (Interview, May 30, 2016).

Consequence as 'a message'. An alternate view of consequences is that consequences *send a message* to the student. The logic is that experiencing something negative results in a student not repeating his or her actions. Mr. Hutchison described his understanding, explaining that the restorative process does not make the message clear enough, specifically for students of middle school age, advocating for the need for more consequences. In his opinion he believed that students who consistently misbehaved were

dealt with more harshly in the past at the school. He felt that minor behaviours were now let go rather than dealt with. He viewed this as setting a negative example for students, leading to more negative behaviour. In terms of students dialoguing as a means of resolving conflict, he expressed:

It almost gives the message that if you do something wrong, so long as you sit there and hear what the other person has to say and you show a little bit of remorse and [someone] hears that, then that's sort of good enough. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

He supported the restorative process in combination with consequences to send the message and to effectively deal with conflict. His consequences included staying in during lunch, a call home to a parent or guardian, or having the student apologize for his or her actions. Ms. Frieze agreed with this assessment, advocating for more consequences in more instances, in order to prevent students from misbehaving.

Others saw this *message* as being ineffective. Mr. Carter viewed consequences that were punishments as a means to greater recidivism rather than positive student change. He saw punishment, or consequences, that were given to the student as allowing students to *get away with* their actions because there was no responsibility and accountability attached to the punishment. He regarded this as only supporting the student in repeating the same action.

The circle: accountability or a message? The purpose of the circle for resolving conflict was a contentious issue for some staff. The circle as a structure for dialoguing was viewed as a means to an end by some and viewed potentially as an end in and of itself by others. Three teachers and a support staff member pronounced that the circle

could not be an outcome: The circle itself was not a consequence. Mr. Hutchison believed that the circle process could result in developing student empathy but that empathy alone did not change student behaviour. A consequence was necessary for students to make positive change. Mr. Gardiner was specifically concerned about “frequent offenders” who he supposed “play us a little” (Interview, May 24, 2016), simply sitting in the circle in order to get past the situation. He assumed that if the circle had not been effective, if the student kept offending, a line had to be drawn to reflect the frequent offences. A different level of consequence needed to be employed that helped the student to make the right choices. He held that students should know which consequence goes with which line. A school can provide support and put structures in place for that support, but it is up to the student to make wise choices. Removal of the student was one of the options articulated by staff to let students know where the line was and to provide increased consequences. Again, this was a contentious issue.

Suspensions

The divide in how people viewed suspensions demonstrated the contrast in how people viewed the effectiveness of suspensions for changing student behaviour. Ms. Ennie posed that some students say they are sorry, but she assumed that often they are not sorry or they do not realize what they did wrong. She recognized the goal of not punishing, but she also believed that if the circle was not working that a suspension was an effective consequence. Later she conceded that often students desire a suspension in order to stay home all day and potentially just play video games. She upheld that, though the school can have expectations, if the family does not support these same expectations, then supporting student change can be a complex endeavor. Mr. Hutchison acknowledged

the argument that suspended students may want to be at home, but he thought that most students wanted to be at school. He expressed that the suspension “sends a very, very clear message that if that is the way you are going to behave, you are not welcome here” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Mr. Gardiner stressed the need for a hybrid system as there needs to be strong consequences, but he also expressed that it does not work for everyone. A system that increases the level of consequence every time “doesn’t work for the tough kids. If you believe it is best for a kid to be in school, you can’t suspend every time a kid makes a mistake” (Interview, May 24, 2016). The vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, also had a similar view, articulating, “If we constantly suspend kids and send them home, we cannot help them” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He spoke of a student who had expressed inappropriate thoughts toward some classmates. While the student had not returned to class, the student was in school for support, for Mr. Baccus wanted to ensure that everything was done to integrate the student back into the school and into his class. He recognized some people were saying the student should not be at the school, but he countered with, “The other option is to be sitting at home in a very unstructured and very unstable home environment” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Mr. Baccus felt this was the best way to support the student.

Ms. Amherst recalled the training sessions and a conversation between a staff member and the trainer. The staff member stated, “Well, the kid needs to be suspended... if they do this, the kid needs to be suspended.”

The trainer then said, “And then what?”

The staff member retorted, “Well then they know.”

And the trainer responded with, “Know what?” (Interview, April 26, 2016). The

trainer asked the staff how a day at home changes people, implying that it does not. Ms. Amherst noted that some students ask to be suspended, but not because they want to be at home. Their reason for wanting to be suspended and sent home is that it is easier than experiencing the shame that comes from facing the individual(s) they had impacted. Ms. Knight shared a story where she saw a conversation impact a child in much greater ways than the suspension did. A student had stolen something at school, and when he returned to school the teacher conducted a circle with the class, including the student who had been suspended:

I think it did have a pretty serious effect on the child. So, every member of the class explained to him how they felt when it had happened. I mean, he fell apart during the circle, which was difficult to watch, but at the same time I think it really did hit home for him. He has had a lot of cases where he has stolen from kids, and since that there has been no accusations or evidence of him stealing again, whereas he had been prior to that. So, I think that that circle is one of those really interesting examples of where that kid... like the suspension didn't mean anything, but sitting in front of his peers and listening to how they felt about him stealing something from them... something from their classroom... the idea of trust and not trusting him, and sort of they... that consequence meant way more to him than the suspension did. (Interview, May 31, 2016)

I noted that this served as a concrete example of how dialogue worked to support student change, though the impact of the suspension prior to the dialogue could not be quantified (Field Notes, June 1, 2016).

Attributes of Effective Responses to Conflict.

When speaking to attributes that create effective responses to conflict, members of the school community articulated the need for fairness and consistency. In terms of consistency, what staff members wanted to be consistent was varied. Fairness was viewed in two ways: that of being *equal* versus that of being *equitable*.

Consistency. Consistency was expressed in terms of consistency of *process* and consistency of *response*. Ms. Ennie stressed that everyone in the community, specifically students, needed to be exposed to an ongoing climate that upheld community and inclusion. To speak to a student part way through the year about expressing feelings and about how to treat other members of the school community was difficult if it had not been a consistent whole-school approach throughout the year. Mr. Gardiner also expressed the need for consistency in process and that it can be confusing for both teachers and students when the process is unclear. He sought answers as to what was allowed and not allowed by administration at the school. He also asked, “Are consequences OK? When does a restorative circle happen? How does that happen? How quickly can it happen?” (Interview, May 24, 2016). He appreciated what the school was doing but would like to see the process tightened up and clarified for teachers and support staff less connected to the office.

Mr. Baccus hoped for a time when students would receive consistency from school to school, recognizing that students may not be led in the same restorative mindset when they moved on to high school. Changing expectations and processes for students would make it difficult on the students. Ms. Amherst spoke to consistency in terms of the expectations for staff and that they should be the same as the expectations for students. It

is an expectation for students that they are honest in regard to their actions and that they are accountable to their behaviour. Ms. Amherst spoke to how she needs the same thing from her staff:

If a staff member does something or says something that maybe isn't great, I say to them, "If I hear it from somebody else, I am going to be upset. If you come to me and you tell me, we'll make sure we work it out. And I am there to support you." (Interview, April 26, 2016)

She expressed that her staff are her community, just like students are the community of teachers. She recognized that she models through her interactions with her staff how she expects staff to interact with students, and therefore this needs to be consistent. She perceived her approach to leading her staff as a restorative mindset.

Mr. Carter supposed that the best thing he could do is to be calm in his demeanour. This allowed him to be consistent in building relationships and restoring relationships. He was intentional about saying hello to students, laughing with students, and being honest with students, regardless of their background or their past behaviour. He took pride in this, because he viewed his actions as a means of teaching students how to be in relation, and when he saw them learning this he would be encouraged.

Finally, Mr. Devine aimed to be consistent in being fair. In his experience, middle school students have a strong sense of justice: "I wanted to let kids know that I was fair and consistent... that I wasn't biased or that I have favourites or no favourites" (Interview, April 14, 2016). Mr. Hutchison also spoke to consistency in terms of fairness, articulating, "If you do something on Tuesday, that that's going to be dealt with in a similar way as if you did it on Thursday" (Interview, May 24, 2016). There was a staff

divide in consistency as *process* versus consistency as *consequence*. The process view aimed to dictate how people entered conversations about conflict, whereas the consequence view sought to dictate the outcomes of responses to conflict (Field Notes, May 25, 2016). Regardless of the perspective, the idea of fairness was a common theme across members of the school community when responding to conflict.

Fairness. Fairness was expressed as a key feature of responses to conflict by administration, teachers, support staff, and students, though being fair meant different things to different people. Mr. Baccus acknowledged that students were not treated the same, but he stressed that students do not need to be treated *equally*, but rather to be fair they need to be treated with *equity*. “Student X may need certain things that student Y doesn’t, and Student Y may need things that student X doesn’t, and you do what is best for each student. To me that is fair: That is equity” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He held that giving students what they need to be successful is the most equitable act a staff member can make. Ms. Lewis explained how she had recently conversed with her class about human rights and equality, as her class was adamant that everyone was equal. She had also stressed the idea of needs to her class, explaining how some students need different things than others. Ms. Lewis told a story of how she described to her class the challenges one of their classmates faced as an individual with autism:

They don’t know this girl is autistic. As a kid, you don’t have a clue who is different and who is not when they look the same, right? And I am like, “What is happening in her brain is completely different than what is happening in your brain.” Those communications are important and it is not like... it is just telling

kids because they need to know. The more you know, the better you can handle different situations. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

The story highlights the importance of students being able to respond to the needs of classmates in order that they can be treated equitably, such that they can ultimately be successful in the classroom (Field Notes, June 7, 2016).

The need for students to believe in fairness in order to be able to dialogue was articulated by Mr. Devine. Students needed to believe that conversations would be open, honest, safe, and fair. If these conditions were not in place, then he was confident that both students and staff would not be open about any subject, but rather go on the defensive. “They need to know that people who are in charge and making decisions about consequences or are there to mediate problems are not biased; that they are fair” (Interview, April 14, 2016). As a student, Rania stated that conversations between the teacher and the student need to uphold her worth as a person. “If the teacher talks to me like I am a 5-year old, obviously I am not going to trust them so much” (Focus Group, May 27, 2017). She viewed fairness as being spoken to like an equal by the teacher, addressed with kindness and respect. Nasir expressed the need for teachers to treat everyone as equals, citing that people enter class with many problems such as stuff people are dealing with at home. He suggested that treating people positively and as equals created a great place for learning. Mr. Jackson noted that respectful and kind conversation can simply be a result of changing the words one uses to speak to and to lead others. This small shift in mindset can have an enormous impact on the people one dialogues with. Observations in the hallways revealed that staff will sometimes speak in tones of anger, believing that this tone will result in the student being more likely to

listen. One conversation from a staff member to a student started with the staff member asking, “Why are you in the office?”

The bewildered student responded calmly with, “My mom hasn’t picked me up yet.”

The staff member angrily retorted back, “You don’t need to be here. Go back to class.” The student obliged (Observations, May 18, 2016). The same conversation could have taken place in a calm tone with almost exactly the same words and would have upheld the dignity of the student. A small shift in mindset regarding tone would have changed the entire conversation. This interaction was one of the most emotional experiences I had during my research journey, for the student was making no attempt to shirk his/her responsibility as a student. Yet, for doing what he/she thought was right, the student was reprimanded (Field Notes, May 18, 2016).

Fairness was seen by many as revealed in action, specifically in one’s discretionary decision-making. Ms. Frieze noted that it was easy to look the other way when one saw some level of conflict. Yet, she expressed that she realized that fairness is reflected in her everyday actions. She wanted students to always know that she was fair, respectful, and positive, whether this was greeting students at the door or enforcing the rules of the school. She needed to lead students by responding well, regardless of the situation.

The Restorative Process

Consistency in restorative processes is critical for implementing and sustaining a restorative culture. Support staff member, Mr. Carter, saw himself as an ambassador for restorative practices, and he recognized that his ability to be fair impacted how people

viewed restorative practices and the restorative process. He also worked to bring students and staff together to have safe and fair dialogues with each other. He understood that he needed to lead restorative practices effectively for the process to be successful. When he did not follow through, he placed himself, others, and the process in a negative light. He stated, “I feel like my role here is to be a pillar of restorative practices” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He believed that his consistency in leading the restorative process had brought accountability to both teachers and students, reflecting that 5 years ago conflicts would come up between students and teachers where their stories differed. He described it as ugly, with accusations going back and forth between students and teachers. The restorative process—investing in relationships, employing dialogue, conducting circles, and asking restorative questions—had brought accountability to the process. He explained that in addition there was a protocol for sending students out of class. Teachers who sent students out needed to inform the office and fill in a pink sheet with information about the name of the student, the class, and the situation. Mr. Carter had seen positive change in the mundane instance of the “student who forgot his pencil” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He explained that prior to restorative practices, when a student came to class without a pencil, teachers did not have a model on which to respond to this situation, nor was there a protocol to follow in terms of sending the student out. The student would be sent to administration or support staff to work through the “problem” of not having a pencil. He saw that the protocol encouraged teachers to work with the students; restorative practices provided a model for responding fairly and relationally. He viewed restorative practices as reducing the traditional exclusionary process where the problem was put on the office or on the student, but not on the teacher:

They [teachers] have to be a part of the process. If they feel like it is a problem, be willing to be a part of the solution. So, either you are going to tackle it on your own and be invested that way, or when you outsource you are still going to be a part of it. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

Restorative processes have eliminated many trips to the office as teachers respond effectively in their classrooms to student issues. Problems brought to the office under a restorative philosophy still seek to engage the student and the teacher in a dialogue. Either way, they are both a part of taking ownership of the resolution process.

The principal, Ms. Amherst, saw this same change in her staff and their response to conflict situations. Reflecting on this change, Ms. Amherst recalled that when a student said the f-word to a teacher 4 years ago, the teacher would have sought immediate suspension for the student. Today, in the same situation, she states the staff will often say, “No, no, no...Let’s have a conversation... let’s talk... let’s see how that goes first” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She believed that staff see how suspensions do not benefit students, for it removes them from the learning process. It also upheld the conflict itself as a learning process.

Theme #6: Leading Restoring Practices out of an Ethic of Care

An ethic of care was a theme central to one’s understanding and experience of the culture of the school. Many saw this culture as a reflection of what it meant to be restorative, and how to respond in a restorative way. This ethic of care was reflected in one’s ability to be empathetic in considering the needs of members of the community, in the expression of emotions and feelings, and ultimately developing relationships built on trust.

Care

Both administrators, a teacher, and two students spoke to care. An ethic of care was important to Mr. Jackson. When speaking of his students, he desired that each of them experienced that somebody on the school staff cared for them and sought to do whatever they could to understand the needs of the student. Ms. Amherst voiced a very similar stance: “I hope that they know and understand that they are cared for and that everybody is there to look out for them” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Rania expressed this same ethic of care as a need she must experience as a student:

What I love most is actually when teachers... like if they call you aside, and ask “is everything alright?” because that shows true caring and compassion from the teacher. And that is something that’s... it makes a person feels good, because you feel like there are people out there for you, no matter what kind of day you are having... there is always someone there. (Focus Group, May 27, 2016)

Safia spoke to care in a similar vein, stating that care was demonstrated by teachers who wanted to talk with students and find out how they are doing. Care by staff ultimately resulted in students trusting those staff members. At the office level, staff members saw an ethic of care demonstrated by members of the school community in responses to students revealing their gender identity. Ms. Amherst recalled how students who have come out as lesbian, gay, or transgender expected a negative response from other students including the possibility of being made fun of, of being bullied, or of being marginalized. In Ms. Amherst’s experience, other students simply accepted who they were without ostracizing them. Mr. Baccus described the story of a female student who identified as transgender and wanted to be identified as male. “They [the student’s class] didn’t make

a big deal out of it. They just treated it as a natural occurrence. And that's the type of acceptance, and honesty, and caring that we are seeing" (Interview, April 6, 2016).

Understanding and supporting students in their needs is central to the ability of members of the community being able to care for each other.

Needs

Three teachers, three support staff members, and four students articulated the importance of looking at the needs of others. In watching his school transform into more of a restorative model, Mr. Carter saw a shift in how teachers would address students. In the past he noted that when a student came to class unprepared to learn, a teacher might respond with, "You don't have your tools. You're not welcome...leave." He saw a change in this response, whereby staff supported the student in naming their needs and moving forward. He observed staff asking many more questions such as: "How are we going to help this child?" or "What are we going to do now?" He sees this shift as integral to the restorative approach at the school, as teachers take ownership not only in relating to students but also in supporting students in their needs, learning or otherwise. Mr. Carter emphasized, "I think that is the part that was probably missing" (Interview, March 30, 2016).

While responding to needs is essential, teachers also articulated that responding to needs is a complex endeavor. Mr. Gardiner expressed his frustration of seeking to address student needs through standardized testing and psychological testing, for he was unsure whether this investment created a better support structure for students. From the outside, he said that people might say that addressing individual learning needs is easy, but when one is in the middle of seeking to identify and accommodate student needs, she/he

experiences the complexity of the process. Ms. Morgan explained how some needs are quite easy to identify, but responding effectively to needs can be difficult. She expressed how responding to the needs of English language learners (ELL) adds another layer to the teaching process. In observing her class, I witnessed how language barriers impacted verbal and written communication with students. The class was highly encouraged to learn presentation skills, demonstrating learning through electronic slideshows. This was a difficult task for those students whose first language was English. Those whose first language was not English struggled to be confident in presenting, as the language barrier added another layer of complexity to the learning process. Fellow students appeared to be very patient and supportive as their peers presented, creating a safe environment for all the students, specifically the ELL students (Observations, May 18, 2016). Mr. Carter noted that students in the school are very successful, even when their needs are substantial. “Some of the kids you are seeing are highest on the behaviour spectrum in the school, but they are calming, they are polite... they have that gentle air to them, right?” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He believed that needs could be met when staff members addressed students in a calm and kind manner. Again, this created a safe environment for responding to needs.

Ms. Lewis explained that part of the challenge of responding to needs was that needs are diverse. She described conducting a circle in class with a selectively mute student. The student would always pass in the circle, but the other students would exclaim, “Just talk... we know you can talk....” The teacher trusted the process and eventually one day the student spoke in a circle. That day, the other students gave her a standing ovation. When the student felt safe, she responded. Ms. Lewis questions how a

teacher could not provide students with the opportunity to consider ““that’s cool... she’s different”” and yet not let difference be a big deal (Interview, June 7, 2016). She desires that students would delight in difference rather than be fearful of it.

Ms. Ennie saw needs as her central role in supporting students, explaining that one of her central questions when students come to her is to ask herself, “What do they need?” She also explained that responding to needs was difficult, for it meant treating students differently. Other staff saw her investing a lot of time with a given student and exclaimed, “Oh... she’s with her again.” She finds that it is easy to refocus some students in times of need and to quickly move them on their way, while other students are a long-term investment. Part of her goal is to help students to be aware of their personal needs and then to respond to them:

A lot of time I find kids of this age though, they are so... it is this generation. They are very needy and they want everything... it is like, “Fix this for me...Fix that.” I tell them they need to be responsible too... and so [I am] trying to get them to work out their own problems. I can’t solve every little girl issue you girls are having. So, I try to get them to be more responsible as well. (Interview, May 4, 2016)

She described how the factors that impact needs are numerous. A student’s family, a student’s anxious behaviours, or a student’s change in responses over time all impact how one addresses the student in order to meet her/his needs. “So every kid that comes in, it is like being cashier: every customer is different. You sort of have to be able to adapt from one situation to another, to another” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Complex needs necessitate complex responses (Field Notes, May 4, 2016).

Mr. Carter supposed, “The people that use restorative practices in their daily settings, they get a better idea of where the student is coming from” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He added that many teachers are not aware of the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of students. He advocated for staff members getting to know needs, leading to insight as to why students might be struggling. He also believed that it can be helpful for students to hear from other students, helping them to understand that they are not the only ones who bring baggage to school with them each day.

Ms. Lewis explained how she changed her approach to learning about the needs of students, recognizing that for students to be honest with their needs, she had to be honest with her needs:

I am very honest. I know they are 11, but it is very important to be honest with them because they go through way more things than I did when I was 11. These poor kids...they are all so different... it's just so different. So, I am honest... I think the circles, and the communicating during circles—I used to be like, “say something nice about somebody,” and try to do stuff like that... not as much this year—that helps a lot. And they all feel a little bit loved, which is important.

(Interview, June 7, 2016)

Mr. Carter added that the needs of everyone in the community were important, whether in conflict situations or otherwise. When teachers led students by modelling what it meant to share, it encouraged students to express their needs.

The three male students explained the importance of having their needs known and how teachers can go about that. Nasir explained that positive teachers understand his problems as a student because they are willing to ask what his day is like. On the other

hand, he expressed his frustration when teachers do not get to know his needs. “It is just like, ‘oh, go to the office, or you are kicked off the team,’ for no reason, because she does not know what is happening at home or like with your friends... and she just judges you” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Likewise, Parelle appreciated those who asked how his day was going, demonstrating concern not only for his student life but also his home life. Omar yearned for a teacher who would accommodate his feelings, encouraging teachers to take the time to read a student’s body language to analyze how students are feeling and then to respond appropriately. Addressing needs allowed the teacher to meet the students where they were at, providing appropriate support in order to establish a strong foundation for engaging students in the learning process (Field Notes, May 27, 2016).

Ms. Lewis expressed a story of using a restorative circle to respond to the needs of a student. A boy with autism frequently shouted out in her class and swore at the her. When he swore at the teacher, the students would ask, “Why do you let him swear at you?” She realized that if it was another student in the class, she would remove the student immediately. The inconsistency in responses needed to be addressed:

So then I have to have the conversation with them... actually like, that we are all different, right? “It didn’t make me feel good that he swore at me, but sometimes he can’t help it. If you swore at me, you’d be gone.” For them, they didn’t understand. They did not understand how I could let somebody swear at me. Like they were just like, flabbergasted, right? And then I had to be like... “maybe they don’t get it.” So I had to address it. We had a circle, and we talked about... honestly, since then the kids have been awesome with him, and he has been amazing. He has a few little outbursts, but he has been amazing. I made sure

every communication home for him was a positive one, because I think in the past it was, “He did *this*, and he did *this*,” you know what I mean? I am like, “this kid needs to feel somewhat good about [sic]”. So, the kids started treating him differently because they realized he was different. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

She emphasized that people in community need to communicate, because the reality is people often do not know where others are at and how they are feeling. As was previously stated, Nasir suggested that circles “help other students to see what students feel like in school” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). He believed that the result is that it positively changes how students interact with other students and staff members. In speaking to the importance of feelings, Mr. Gardiner expressed:

I think there is a quote out there, “People won’t remember what you did, but they will remember how you made them feel.” If it’s true, you can probably think of people that... friends... or teachers... or somebody in your life that made you feel good about yourself... or bad. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

Students were very passionate about the subject of feelings. Safia described feelings as “the most important thing in a human, because they are things that show who you are” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Rania stressed that feelings are often hidden, and having ways—such as circles—to share feelings is important. “If they have been really crabby for the past few days and then they say how they are feeling, that really makes me sympathetic and I would always make a little mental note to be extra kind to this person” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Sharing feelings often results in empathy, a key component for changing how members of the school community view others and respond to others.

Empathy

Two teachers expressed that it is so easy to forget what it is like to be a student. Ms. Morgan described that, as a teacher, she needed to consider what it was like for students to partake in lessons and to reflect on the risk factors students can experience each day as members of a classroom and as participants in a school community. Likewise, she added that contemplating safety factors to address the risks students face is important. Mr. Carter reminded himself often that he can reflect on his life having experienced what it was like to be an adolescent, but students have not experienced what it is like to be an adult. Both are describing the need to be *empathetic*. During the research, I noted how the ability to care and to address needs can be created through empathy for one's situation (Field Notes, May 25, 2016). Mr. Gardiner views restorative as supporting people to see another's perspective: "to live in their shoes" (Interview, May 24, 2016).

The vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, explained how he often had conversations with staff about being sympathetic or encouraging teachers to stand in the shoes of a student. He wanted teachers to understand how students' actions or behaviour often reflect the shoes they stand in each day. He acknowledged the teacher's frustrations in this situation, but he also encouraged the teacher to focus on the positives, as he desired to see both the teacher and the student return to the learning process. He recognized that this dialogue could be difficult at times, for some teachers have no grey area; no desire to consider another perspective. Ms. Lewis held that one of the most effective ways for teachers to develop empathy was to put student situations or needs in adult terms, for the feelings and emotions a student has often mimic the emotions an adult has in a similar situation.

Mr. Gardiner stated that he witnesses empathy when he observes students viewing other students from a new perspective, outside of the person they see on the playground each day. He indicated that when students hear other students say, “Johnny’s mom is sick” or “Their dad is living in Fort McMurray [referring to the Fort McMurray fire in May 2016]” (Interview, May 24, 2016), their perspective changes and empathy increases. Ms. Frieze thought that empathy was best taught through experiences and dialogue rather than simply telling students about empathy.

We used to take years at this school teaching character, trying to teach children to have empathy. And I don’t think you can teach through skits to have empathy, but I think you can here through these experiences, because kids can always hear from different perspectives, and as they hear that they can start to feel it.

(Interview, May 30, 2016)

Ms. Morgan told a story of a boy in her class who would not return a library book. He did not see his failure to return the book as a big deal and he appeared to ignore the issue. She used a circle to try to have the students in the class explain what it would be like to lend something and to not have it returned. Eventually the boy was asked what it would be like to lend his basketball out to someone and not have it returned. It was this scenario that impacted the young man and resulted in his returning the book. Once he was empathetic toward what it was like to not have something returned, he was able to understand the impact of his decisions on others.

While many are in favour of empathy as a means of supporting students to change, others were doubtful that it was always effective. Mr. Hutchison claimed that teaching empathy was important but that empathy alone was not enough, deeming that

students of middle school age were not ready to fully reflect on their actions and so conversations for creating empathy were thereby glossed over by many students. He believed that other forms of consequences were necessary for the student to move forward. Ms. Ennie observed a student at the school in whom she had seen no remorse. “For some people I just don’t think it will work, because as much as he says he has changed, I don’t think so” (Interview, May 4, 2016). She believed the police had spoken to this young man, and she was quite sure if that did not scare him into changing, she was not sure what would. The inability of the student to be remorseful and to show shame for his actions appeared to be integral in his lack of change.

Omar posed that when someone understands how another person is feeling, it allows one to see the needs of the other person and to empathize with him/her. He perceived that when a teacher responds to students without their needs in mind, it results in reprimanding the student or simply telling the student to do things that are not in his or her best interests. Omar believed that the ability of a teacher to respond on an emotional level, taking needs into consideration, built true trust. Trust is the final focus of this theme.

Trust

Both administrators, three teachers, two support staff members, and two students spoke to the importance of trust. Mr. Jackson viewed the development of trust as one of the biggest things that changed in the school culture when restorative practices were introduced. He acknowledged that they had different students than they did in the past, but he viewed the practice of restorative practices as the factor that turned things around.

If you have a system by which you are solving... like, if you've got a system in place where teachers can actually deal with a lot of the issues in class, with a restorative practice model, ... it develops more trust between the kid and the teacher, right? And the teacher and the admin, right? (Interview, May 26, 2016)

He believed that a culture of trust became wider spread and impacted the greater community. While he had seen some of his colleagues resist this change, he believed many had come on board. He also indicated that if everyone was not on board, then restorative practices would not have the impact that people believed it could.

Students and staff described what it meant to be able to trust someone. Nasir said he knew whether teachers trusted him by how they looked at him. "Sometimes you can read what they are saying with their eyes" (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Rania trusted teachers because of their credentials, believing that the time and effort they had invested into making teaching a career demonstrated their desire to be teachers. Hanna described trust in terms of the learning environment she experienced, believing that there was a trust between teachers and students when the environment was safe:

You can say something, share an idea, present, and you know that you have friends that will support you, even though they may not know you as much as someone else in the class ... they won't laugh and they won't comment on anything you say because they know who you are and what you can handle.

(Focus Group, April 27, 2016)

Mr. Devine experienced trust coming about as a result of knowing a person, but ultimately trust was revealed in one's actions whereby the actions sought to uphold the best interests of another. He trusted people when he saw them seeking to make decisions

that supported people, whether in school, their jobs, or their lives. In his role as a member of the support staff, he viewed students making decisions whereby they were seeking to support themselves, fellow students, and their school. Mr. Devine noted that after a few years of restorative practices, he found that students would provide him with truth very quickly after he asked for their story. In conflict situations, he may have to do some investigating with those involved and with witnesses, but he noted that the stories meshed very closely because they were truthful. Truth was a result of trusting the process. This made his ability to follow up and support students much easier. Ms. Knight described how the trust she had built with her students allowed her to address their needs, for they were forthright with where they were at. “It is important for me that they trust me completely, and they usually do. As soon as I come in, they lay it on the table... all of their stresses and anxiety” (Interview, May 31, 2016). While she often feels like a social worker as much as a teacher, she is thankful for the culture she has with her students. Mr. Baccus echoed this in describing a recent story. A student came up to him and told him that he had heard about the possibility of a fight amongst students at the school. The vice-principal said that the student claimed, “I am only coming to you because I know I can trust you” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Mr. Baccus believed that the staff always needed to be building the *trust factor*. While he wanted to care for the people in his school, the same student also wished to remain anonymous. Mr. Baccus acknowledged that giving the child a voice, listening and not judging, and building that trust ultimately allowed that student to be able to support the staff at the school to create a safe environment and a stronger community. At the same time, providing anonymity supported the needs of the student who provided information to the administration.

As was earlier quoted, principal Ms. Amherst stated that trusting people was the foundation of all change in the school. Ms. Lewis articulated the importance of staff trusting leadership. Speaking to what it takes for a teacher to change her/his ways, she stated that they need to love their principal and vice-principal, because if they do not like them, if they do not trust them, then they will not change even if they want to. She said that if staff do not trust the leadership, then they will not want to support the leadership in executing their vision. The story of how staff has resisted the restorative journey is expanded upon in the next theme.

Theme #7: Resisting Change and Resisting the Resistors

This theme examines resistance to the restorative philosophy and factors that contributed to resistance. Participants articulated how staff resisted change and how leadership—both official and unofficial leaders—worked to navigate people through the change process. The section culminates with an examination of the staff circle and how this event served as a microcosm for the macrostory of resistance amongst the staff.

Resistance to Restorative Change

The introduction of restorative practices brought about noticeable tension as individuals responded in different ways to the new direction. While he was very open to the restorative philosophy, Mr. Jackson noted that change was often associated with, “next best things” or “next new things” (Interview, May 26, 2016) and staff members sometimes viewed the direction as following a trend in education rather than a school vision for enhancing learning. He believed that some felt like the new direction was forced upon them. These staff members were inclined to respond with, “I can’t handle this new thing” (Interview, May 26, 2016). He added that he had colleagues who may not

have changed their teaching habits for 20 years, but this did not necessarily correlate with whether or not they responded to the restorative direction. From his perspective, the response was based more on personality than it was on previous reactions to change.

Mr. Devine articulated that some teachers felt like restorative practices was done *to* them as opposed to being a philosophy meant to support them, the students, and the learning at the school. He was surprised by how vocal some staff were in criticizing restorative practices and by how individuals criticized the leadership implementing the change: “They are attacking the person who is presenting a new idea” (Interview, April 14, 2016). He remembered people arguing that restorative practices were a waste of time, allowing people in the building, specifically students, to get away with “all kinds of stuff.” Mr. Devine recalled that people with the same philosophy of antirestorative would talk in small cliques, speaking negatively of the direction of leadership:

I think that was challenging [resistance] because it can wear you [leaders] down, especially when you are trying to do something good... you end up trying to make people’s lives fulfilling... you are not trying to be negative. You’re trying to help people, and they are being negative and resistant. And that sometimes was disheartening, I think, for people who were trying to make that change.

(Interview, April 14, 2016)

Mr. Carter recalled that the training had a profound impact on him and consequently impacted how he interacted with students. He was surprised when staff members would retort with, “This is not for me” (Interview, March 30, 2016). Ms. Lewis thought that seeing the restorative process in action and experiencing effective results helped some people to come on board, but she also accepted that this did not work for everyone. “I

have a good friend, but he thinks I am nuts. He will never buy in. He will never, ever buy into it” (Interview, June 7, 2016). Mr. Baccus stated that there are still teachers today who are not fully committed to the process. They can see the benefits, but they resist committing. He added that their resistance meant that the message that came from the school was not unified, which impacted the ability of the people in the school to fully uphold the restorative philosophy.

Leading People Away From Resistance... and Toward the Vision.

Administration, certain support staff, and some teachers continually worked to lead other members of the school community in advocating for the use of restorative practices to fulfill the best interests of students. Mr. Baccus shared a recent event where a teacher had reached her tipping point with a student. He said that the teacher expressed, “We need to get him out of here... we can’t forgive this kid anymore... I don’t want any more circles: I am done with circles” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Mr. Baccus brought in a neutral member from the school board—without the student present—to facilitate a circle that would allow the story of the class and the teacher to be heard, in order to work at developing conditions that would allow the student to rejoin the classroom community. Ultimately, the teacher agreed to continuing to work with the student and to have him return to the class. Mr. Baccus noted that he simply cannot send an e-mail that states, “We no longer forgive this kid; we can’t have him back” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He always sought to advocate for the student, to get him back to the school, and back to learning. He added that his long-term goal was for the child to know that his classmates do not hate *him*, but rather that they hate his *actions*, hoping that from there he could be accepted back into the school community. He elucidated on his point:

Ultimately, he needs to hear, “OK, in spite of everything I have done, they are still willing to give me a chance. They are still willing to accept me.” So, with that and with the other steps we are trying to take with him—with one-on-one, mentoring, counselling piece—I think hopefully that he will see, “OK, all they want is for me to be nice to them. All they want is for a kid to fit into the class and to just be normal in the class.” (Interview, April 6, 2016)

Ms. Lewis observed how circles could impact school culture and encouraged her colleagues to employ circles in their classrooms. She would tell her colleagues that students in grade 8 were begging for circles and questioned why they did not use them. Her colleagues cited time as the prime factor. They also named their discomfort with the process. She pushed them on how students learned more when in a circle and that sometimes students did not even realize they were engaged in learning. Yet, she saw her colleagues dig their heels in when it came to restorative circles. She added, “I have zero desire to teach adults. They are stuck in their ways sometimes. It [school leadership] has to be a hard job” (Interview, June 7, 2016).

Mr. Devine explained his strategy for leading colleagues who were not willing to engage with the change. He asked colleagues to consider, *what have you got to lose?* He described how he spoke to his colleagues to encourage them to work with restorative practices:

“I understand your point of view... but you need to be open and give it a try.” I think that’s the message I communicated with people consistently. “It doesn’t cost you anything to try it, and if you try it and it doesn’t work or you feel it isn’t for you, then don’t do it.” But I said to people, “You can’t be just critical and not give

it a chance. I think you need to at least give it a chance,” because it is not fair to be critical and not try it at least. Otherwise you are just being critical. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He did not speak to what might happen if one attempted to engage with restorative practices and chose not to continue using the process.

Communication

Communication was named as a reason that people would not engage with the restorative philosophy. Specifically, teachers spoke of not understanding the processes used by the office to respond to students, and whether the teachers might consider these processes restorative. Mr. Hutchison recalled the office using formal restorative processes in the past whereby students, parents, support staff, teachers, and administration had been involved in restorative circles, but he was unaware of formal processes occurring over the past couple of years. Ms. Knight echoed this sentiment. She knew that students were sent to the office from either the hallways or from classrooms, but it was not clear how individuals in the office worked with these students. She thought that if it was communicated to staff that students were handled restoratively (e.g., processes, conversations, questions), it would have supported the building of a restorative culture amongst the staff. Likewise, Ms. Morgan expressed that communication from administration was minimal but stated that she and her colleagues held some responsibility for the lack of communication with the office. While she is willing to dialogue with her administration, she knows that not all of her colleagues are prepared to do so. She considered the inability of staff to communicate, specifically to communicate their frustrations, to be a problem.

Mr. Hutchison stressed the importance of transparency, specifically regarding major issues at the school. While teachers sometimes knew of major issues, especially with specific students, he articulated that they were unaware of how administration had responded:

It's important to know sort of what's going on and what sort of things the administration and other people are doing in the building to sort of correct those behaviours or change those behaviours and that sort of thing. And again, you get misinformation because somebody says, "I heard that this is what happened" and other people confirm it and [there are] rumours. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

Ms. Ennie spoke to the disconnect between teachers taking ownership of their students but not always being aware of the decisions made about their students by people at the office level. This included knowing why a student is returned to class or kept in the office area. She has heard teachers say, "No one tells me anything. It is my student and I don't know what is going on with them" (Interview, May 4, 2016). One story included a student who was moved out of a class without the teacher being made aware. She reflected on her experience of being a teacher. Even though she had students at her previous school "who drove me nuts and who were horrible" (Interview, May 4, 2016), she wanted to know what was going on with them and desired to continue to work with them because she wanted to support the students in making positive change. She was empathetic toward her colleague who was unaware of having the student removed from her class.

Mr. Baccus recognized that staff appreciate communication. While staff may not always agree with his decisions, he notes that when he communicates to the staff and

provides a rationale for the discretion he uses, they are more understanding of the decisions he makes. He added that generally he is privy to more information than teachers and support staff when making decisions. While he recognized that no staff member ever knows everything, he felt that generally administration would see the larger picture in terms of a student's needs. This divide in knowledge sometimes impacted the relationship between those who worked in the school office, and the teachers and support staff who generally worked outside of the office.

The Office Divide

Mr. Devine recalled the epiphany he had when he moved from working outside of the office to working in the school office:

When you are not in those positions of power, or you are not making decisions about consequences, or you're the person who is not resolving those issues, it is very easy to say: "Well, if I was in those positions, I would have done *this*...I would have done *this*." And I think that when I went into that guidance contact role, I sort of had those ideas: "I am gonna deal with this issue." And when I got there, I quickly realized that those issues were much more complicated than my outside perspective allowed me to see, and that things always happen for a reason, and we don't always see those reasons up front. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

As a teacher, Mr. Jackson understood how people could question the decision-making of staff members in the office, for it is easy when not directly involved in a situation to believe that not enough is being done in response to a student's actions. But he also understood "that it is hard for anybody who is a staff member to see the big picture like the administration would" (Interview, May 26, 2016). He believed that

balancing the needs of everyone involved, specifically in a conflict situation, was a difficult balancing act.

Mr. Gardiner remembered his days supporting students with behavioural challenges and how staff members rarely fully understood the picture of a student. He recalled that he needed to have a long-term view if he was to make headway with students. Building relationships with students required making small gains at every interaction. Yet he understood that from the perspective of people who worked outside of these relationships, they might question why students visited him again and again and again. While his conversations with students resulted in students telling truth, people on the outside would question his decision-making: “On the outside, people go, ‘He told a teacher to f*** off, and he is not suspended’ ... right?” (Interview, May 24, 2016). While Mr. Gardiner believed there was a lack of consequences at the school, he understood the complexity of making those decisions as a result of his time working one-on-one with students in behaviour support.

Ms. Ennie also reflected on how her perspective changed when she worked more closely with the office:

When you are in the classroom, you see all of the horrible things and you think the office isn’t doing anything, but a lot of times they are doing stuff here and you don’t really see it though, you know?” (Interview, May 4, 2016)

She had a different perception of the office now that she had seen them working with students firsthand, trying to get them back on track as individuals and in the learning process. I noted that an advantage for staff working in the office was that they had both time and space for engaging in one-on-one dialogues with students. On the other hand,

teachers and support staff in classrooms, while able to conduct group dialogues, lacked time and space to engage in one-on-one conversations (Field Notes, June 9, 2016).

Staff Circles

A means of communication tried by staff at the school was dialoguing in circles at staff meetings. Both support staff and teachers looked on staff meetings as circles as positive experiences, but the habit of using circles at staff meetings was not sustained. Early on, teachers and support staff realized that sitting in a circle, dialoguing with colleagues, and sharing stories and feelings were not comfortable for some staff members. Ms. Lewis recalled that staff were nervous and embarrassed during the first circle. Yet, as an individual who upheld the circle and restorative practices, she thought having staff share something about their day was awesome. Ms. Knight remembered something similar, whereby some staff were very uncomfortable to the point where they did not want to sit in the circle. Yet, she believed that the staff benefited from the process once they started sharing:

There was one question about... something you were grateful for this year or something, and it was just really interesting what people shared. I think it made a lot of people feel good because people were saying ... "I really appreciated so and so, because they supported me and mentored me." So, people were talking about individuals and it made a lot of people feel... there was just a lot of gratitude going around that people don't always take the time to say. So those were really good... those moments. I think we connected. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

Mr. Devine appreciated how people shared about what was happening in classrooms and elsewhere in the building. He recalled people sharing about "something that really

inspired us that day, or something hopeful we saw in our classroom” (Interview, April 14, 2016). The circle allowed him to hear about things that he otherwise would not know about. He also remembered a few people who were not willing to participate. Ms. Lewis recollected how people had to become comfortable with supporting each other and encouraging each other. “So, they sit there and then you just watch them, and they say something nice for other people and you just start melting. And they become like, ‘It’s actually OK’” (Interview, June 7, 2016). One of her surprises of the circle time was hearing people speak that she did not expect to speak and how nice it was to hear from other people on her staff. Mr. Gardiner remembered that sitting in a circle was good, but he also remembered it being difficult for staff, as the circle created a venue where staff could not hide.

Two staff members sought to understand why some staff members chose to refrain from participating in the circle, or even sit in the circle. Ms. Knight wondered if their choices were a result of personality, or perhaps being front and centre in front of their peers. “This is what always is fascinating to me: they are in front of kids all day long, but the minute they are in front of adults they are not comfortable” (Interview, May 31, 2016). She believed that some staff members were not rejecting the idea, but rather their personality revealed that they were individuals who were shy and socially self-conscious. The circle, a place designed for building community, placed them completely out of their comfort zone. Ms. Frieze had another theory, believing that the circle forced them to give up the control they were used to having each day in front of class. “You are just one of 30 people in a circle, so that is hard for some.” She believed the lack of control that resulted in an unpredictable environment due to unknown questions and

unknown responses was very difficult for some staff. Ultimately, she viewed the failure to engage as a difference in priorities. While some staff wanted to engage with the community and build community, others appeared to not be interested.

For two staff members, the circle process was an opportunity for modelling: modelling what takes place in the circle and modelling what takes place following circles. Mr. Jackson viewed the staff circle as a place for modelling activities and circles that could be used in the classroom. While he thoroughly enjoyed the staff circle, he found the failure of some staff to participate to be bizarre. Staff were not engaging with the practice they were asked to use every day in classes. Mr. Devine viewed the failure of some to participate as an opportunity for leading, by dialoguing after the meeting about their decision not to participate: “That would be part of the process of being restorative in the sense that you’re checking in with these people” (Interview, April 14, 2016). If he was the principal, he would want to ask the staff member, “Did I do something?” “Can I help you?” or “What’s wrong?” assuming something was not right if people did not participate. The failure to engage in the circle was viewed as an opportunity to follow up on the needs of the staff in order to move forward and to make things right.

Ms. Frieze stressed how she thought the staff circle was important, especially because it did not take long to set up and to conduct. But, in order to be effective, she believed it had to happen at every staff meeting in order that it would become a normal part of what the staff would do: “And then it’s routine, and everyone knows you will do it, and then it’s natural” (Interview, May 30, 2016). She also believed that when staff felt good coming out of a staff circle, they would be more likely to facilitate circles with their own students. She believed the best person to lead the circle was the administration,

because she felt that it was not easy for a staff member to conduct a circle with his or her peers. She believed leadership was required for staff to effectively set up circles and to answer questions.

And then people will be like, “This made me feel good. I will go in and do it with my students now.” “I didn’t know that person noticed that... Now I am going to talk to them in the staff room.” “I didn’t know that, maybe I will go to the staff room.” You know what I mean? ... you can just build a positive community.

(Interview, May 30, 2016)

While she deeply appreciated the staff circles, the formal circles were short lived with the staff, only occurring a few times. She supported a staff circle to discuss staff circles, because she saw a lack of community amongst the staff. The circle was viewed as a means for supporting staff members in the work they did each day, a critical part of community building.

The short-lived life of staff circles was addressed by two other teachers. Ms. Knight recalled that the staff circles were a way to promote the restorative approach that teachers were asked to use in class. She also advocated for going back to staff meetings in circles to share, to support each other, and to promote restorative practices. Ms. Lewis recalled a time when it was stated that each staff meeting would be a circle, but her excitement waned as the circles were used for a couple of staff meetings and then ceased. Ms. Amherst spoke to her passion for circles as a principal, but also to why they ceased. She appreciated that staff meetings with circles were more jovial, allowed staff to share stories, and all around people felt more supported. Staff meetings were generally at the end of the day, and she recognized that lifting the mood when people desired to go home

was effective for everyone involved. Nevertheless, the pressure of both limited time and what needed to be addressed resulted in circles not happening:

I really would like to do more circles in staff meetings, but we are restricted a little bit with what we have to do at staff meetings and the amount of time that we have. We are restricted to 75 minutes, and the board has been sending us what we have to do at staff meetings. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

She recognized that the connection and the community lost due to other demands had a negative impact on the staff. The next section elaborates on the importance of humanizing schools through a focus on relationships and community building.

Theme #8: Humanizing a School Culture

Both staff and students spoke to the importance of *humanizing* all people in the school in order that students and staff alike felt that they were upheld as people of worth. The theme of humanizing strengthens evidence for the existence of restorative practices in the culture of the school. This section—more than any other of the themes—was revealed in story, demonstrating the importance of people knowing they are valued. Likewise, the theme exhibits the importance of leadership intentionally investing in followers in order to build trust and strengthen relations. The theme speaks to viewing others as Thou, relationships, modelling, and the cost of being relational.

Viewing Others as Thou

Martin Buber (1923/1970) spoke to the concept of I–Thou, expressing the importance of how we view the *other*, but also naming that how we see others reflects ourselves. Mr. Gardiner shared how in a previous position he supported students with behavioural needs. He spoke to how he would help students to see *the truth*, rather than

your truth, for one's self-perception is not always accurate and often is not uplifting. He described it in this way: "Kids will honestly think that what they are telling you is the truth: 'This teacher hates me.' They are bent on that. They are sold. And that is their truth. And your truth then dictates your behaviour" (Interview, May 24, 2016). He also stated how the things one hears all the time can become truth for an individual as one becomes conditioned to what one is told. He added that conditioning can ultimately impact a student's performance:

Think about any school... like a high school hallway is a nasty place. A lot of it is sarcasm or just joking around, but if you take that in and you go: "O my god, this is an ugly purple shirt", like you know what I mean? And you start thinking about it... that's what you believe. So, I think that, to me, is a huge ... huge gap in education. Huge! (Interview, May 24, 2016)

Mr. Gardiner noted that every experience one has is either positive or negative. He contrasted the negative experiences a student can have in hallways with the experiences he has watched a colleague provide for her students. She used circles to help students share highs and lows and supported students in seeing they are human. The circle allowed them to celebrate each other and themselves. He added that the circle allowed students to see that each of them "are going through things." Being treated as one with worth is important for both staff and students.

Staff and I–Thou. Ms. Ennie shared how her desire to work in a guidance role stemmed from how her guidance counselors treated her when she was in school.

It was like... you come to guidance, you choose some courses... if you are smart you go to university... and if you are not, you go here. That was it. That's

basically what it was. So, I didn't want that for anyone else. (Interview, May 4, 2016)

She shared about a student she had been working with throughout the year and how she had been encouraged by the changes she had seen in the student, helping her to see the Thou in others. The student recently told off an adult in the school, and Ms. Ennie experienced how she could lead the student to reflect on her actions, whereas she would not have before: "Six months ago, she would have said, 'I am not saying anything to her... she deserved it'. So... you know... just getting her to think about her own behaviour... and she does think about it" (Interview, May 4, 2016).

Mr. Carter told of a recent trip to the roller rink with some of the grade 7s from the school. He had coached some of the students and had the unfortunate task of removing some of the students from the team due to poor attendance. He was very impressed by the high support the students showed him when he needed skating instructions:

They were really teaching me. I am like, "They might not even realize what they've done." Maybe because they have seen that I have helped them and now that I wasn't confident in something, they were kind of reciprocating that.

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

The staff member was humbled by how the students supported him and that they did not hold a grudge even though he had cut them from the basketball team. Mr. Gardiner reflected on what is ultimately important to him regarding teaching, citing how one of his colleagues has taught him to never lose his cool.

When it comes down to us... to what really matters in life. You come, you do your best... try to make kids feel good about themselves... get them ready for the next level, but at the end of the day.... I mean you can't just scream and yell at a kid. Who is that helping? (Interview, May 24, 2016)

In speaking to valuing the worth of people, Mr. Baccus relayed a story about students during the lunch hour. Students had been asked to eat in the gymnasium due to lack of available supervisors. They sought a place that allowed for more students to eat lunch with less adult supervision. He was bothered by students eating off the floor and by students jumping over other students as they ate. He worked with the principal to alter the supervision schedule so students could eat in classrooms, using chairs and desks:

It was just not a conducive eating environment. Getting them off there [the floor], was treating them more like normal humans eat. I think that's what we did... we took them from—I hate to say this—almost treating them like animals to a more humanistic approach to eating. Right away, people have noticed a change in the lunch behaviour. Far fewer problems. Less garbage to pick up. The gym is not constantly dirty, so the gym can now be used as a gym. That's what I think in terms of turning it around... they are just treated more like people. (Interview, April 6, 2016)

Each story articulates how, when students are treated as Thou, they respond positively to the individual upholding them as worthy (Field Notes, May 25, 2016).

Students and I–Thou. Five of the six students spoke to what made them feel worthy. Rania stated that students must feel like the teacher, “is on our side” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). She noted that if a student felt like the teacher was against them,

then it impacted one's emotional state, one's mental state, and one's learning. Hanna said that a student that does not have a bond with a teacher is being *taught*, but when the student has a relationship with the teacher it is much easier to *learn*. She stressed this was essential everywhere, but especially in a school. She added that when teachers have issues with students, polite reminders go much further toward change than yelling or removing students from class. Rania iterated the same point: "Their [the teachers'] reaction to the student's misbehaviour is what decides how a student will react to their reaction" (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). She said a calm teacher created calm students and an angry teacher aggravated students. She suggested that there were deeper reasons why students misbehaved and the teacher likely adds more to their baggage or their sadness by being angry. Other students suggested the same idea. Each student spoke passionately about how they wanted to be addressed by teachers. Safia proposed that nothing is more embarrassing than a teacher who addresses a student about misbehaviour from the front of the class. Addressing students off to the side, quietly, or outside the class was much easier for the student: "Talk to them about their behaviour, politely... so the student will understand they are not fighting... they are just working with you" (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Omar also had witnessed that addressing students from in front of a class was ineffective: "I have seen other people who like do something that isn't necessarily really bad... they get picked down from the whole class, and it just makes them feel worse" (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Parelle articulated the same point, saying he hates it when a teacher yells, "Why did you do that?" (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). He also wanted to be addressed one-on-one rather than in front of his friends and peers.

Omar referred to his really good teachers as friends, having made the transition from one who teaches to one who is a friend and a teacher. He admired one teacher in particular who supported him in his studies. Rania stressed the importance of friendship, trust, and support, but also stated that these are not one-sided things. “You need to start with yourself I think, ...before you can force anything from others” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). She recognized that the relationship requires the investment of the teacher, but also the investment of the student.

Relationships.

Mr. Devine posited that one of the key concepts of restorative practices is relationships. He stressed that relationships needed to be strong so people could talk about things, whether it was sharing or navigating conflict. Yet, he also stated that strong, positive, and trusting relationships are needed to enter into restorative practices: “I think it would be very difficult to implement restorative practices [without positive relationships], because it is a change in mindset in how you are going to deal things when they go wrong” (Interview, April 14, 2016). He held that followers need to believe that leaders have good intentions and that leaders desire a positive culture. If followers trust this, they could give leaders a chance. He saw that as central for moving forward with any change, specifically restorative practices.

A leadership pattern that was exposed in the research process was that of leadership being intentional about making decisions for people and for learning that sought to enhance opportunities for relationship building. Ms. Amherst explained the decisions she had made as principal for building positive relationships amongst members of the school community. She spoke to the training she brought to her staff, specifically

the restorative practice training and circle training that placed community members in positions to relate. The timetable was structured to eliminate the rotary schedule and to provide each student with more time with fewer teachers. This allowed students to build relationships, for teachers to “own” students, and for teachers to know where students were, which reduced skipping considerably. This also resulted in reduced transition time, and therefore time for learning curriculum was increased. In observations it was noted how one support staff member in particular, Mr. Carter, had an open door. It was clear that students knew that this office was theirs to come into: the door was always open. Students were in and out, saying hello, or asking for a water bottle. Students felt cared for and safe there, found a place to have a conversation, and ultimately had their needs met (Observations, March 30, 2016). Speaking to his open door, he stated:

I really help them figure things out. And the students that maybe I spoke to one time for a behaviour issue, I'll say hi to them every time. And that relationship is formed. Not only do I want to teach them... I feel like I am consistent in the importance of restoring relationship, but even more so, I show them how to maintain a relationship. I think that is what I am the most consistent in... that is what I take pride in. Even with these students who come by [my office window] and are waving. A lot of these students have never been in trouble, or have never been on a sports team, or anything I have done. I just see them, and I say hi.

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

He did not care if his interactions were with students he saw regularly due to conflict or students he has never met who might be on the honour roll. At all times, in every interaction, he sought to build relationships with all the students.

Mr. Carter spoke to an act by the school leadership of intentionally forming a decision around relationships, referring to the event as something that seemed small. From my perspective the decision was incredibly important (Field Notes, March 30, 2016). A staff member at the school was diagnosed with cancer. He realized that administration could have let people know via e-mail, but the announcement was deliberately made face-to-face. He recalled how the announcement, done in person, meant that everyone heard it and that everyone had the opportunity to stop and take the news in: “And that meeting brought everyone together... it’s a reminder that it is happening to her, but it affects all of us. It affects all of our community. The way he did it was restorative in a sense” (Interview, March 30, 2016).

Ms. Amherst believed that the focus on relationships changed the culture. She believed relationships between staff and students were rich and she believed this led to students having a voice. The voice and the relationships meant that issues were worked out in the classroom rather than in the office and, as a result, administration did not have to intervene as much. Ultimately, she viewed that through the relationship, both student and teacher were more invested in each other and thereby the learning.

Role Modelling

Modelling was a term referred to consistently by participants in the research process. Modelling presented itself as a scaffold, starting with administration who led teachers and support staff through modelling, then teachers who led students by modelling, and culminated in students modelling both for peers and for children from local elementary schools.

Administration as role models. Ms. Amherst stressed that an important part of leading the staff to work restoratively was modelling the process, demonstrating the success that can come about through using restorative practices. She worked with her leadership team to strategize how they could best model to staff and “how to build that circle of influence” (Interview, April 26, 2016) that would continue to model to other staff members. Likewise, vice-principal, Mr. Baccus, articulated the need for modelling:

I think if I can model what is a restorative approach, and if I can model to teachers that, no matter what this kid has done...he can be the most evil kid in the world in your mind...but if I am willing to listen to that kid, and I am willing to listen to what they have to say about why they are doing what they are, and give them a voice...the more they see that, the more I think they are willing to adopt it.

(Interview, April 26, 2016)

Teachers expressed their need to experience modelling from staff members, specifically administration. For Mr. Jackson, modelling built trust between staff members and administration. “There is a certain amount of trust that you feel when an administrator is not only using restorative practices with you... actually practicing what they preach with regards to that” (Interview, May 26, 2016). Ms. Knight stressed that new initiatives must be modelled. She held that when staff see restorative practices used, with the results and associated consequences, it is easier for a teacher to buy in and use the practice. Ms. Lewis spoke to what happens without modelling, naming that if the only investment is training, but no one views administration following through, then the likelihood of culture changing is almost nonexistent, exclaiming, “No one cares” (Interview, June 7, 2016). While she knew that she constantly thought in terms of being

restorative, she held that some of her colleagues needed consistent modelling and support or they would be done with the initiative. Modelling needed to be a consistent act to influence the culture as a whole.

Teachers as role models. Two staff members described how they saw the importance of modelling in their position. For Mr. Jackson, it is his use of language and tone that he wanted students to imitate: “The way that you speak to the students is modelling to them how to interact appropriately” (Interview, May 26, 2016). He believed that each of his conversations modelled how he desired to interact in any situation, so whether he was teaching or responding to issues, he wanted students to know they would have a civil conversation that was worth partaking in. Mr. Carter recognized that everything he did was modelling. When he used restorative practices effectively, he knew this demonstrated a positive example for both students and staff, whereas when he was inconsistent and failed to use restorative practices effectively, it set a poor example, leading to people not trusting the restorative approach. Likewise, students upheld the value of role models and modelling. Hanna described her school as one of positivity and that positivity started with the role models at her school, teachers and students alike, who brought a positive spirit to the school. Rania also described her school as amazing and named that it was role models who led her to want to change her school to always be better. The students understood that role models supported students themselves in becoming models, leading students to be leaders amongst the student body.

Students as role models. Nasir, just like Mr. Carter, voiced that role models can be good models or poor models. “Sometimes role models show in a bad way, and that is how it affects community” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). He was proud of the fact that

students from his school would go out to other schools to teach them about role models. Hanna explained how she had the opportunity to serve in her school and to go to other schools to lead younger students. She said her confidence to do this was “because we have been told and we’ve been shown that we have something to offer to students in our school. And the teachers here give us opportunities to do that” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Mr. Carter shared a story of how his modelling impacted his students, which impacted other students:

There are two students who, when I met them, it was at the feeder school with our program that goes to the younger school to play some cooperative games... and they were always in trouble. Every time I saw them they were there because they were in trouble. We went a few weeks ago, and they are in grade 7 now. I met them during grade 5. And we were playing these games in the gym, and there was this kid in grade 2 and he’s sobbing. Sobbing, sobbing, sobbing. He’s pretty mischievous. Still a sweet kid...tough life. And those two students—some people might look at them as troublesome, and in some regards they are—they went over, and they leaned over, and they put their hand on this kid’s back, and they were consoling him. And I was like, “Ho-ly!” Like even if they don’t see it, I’m like, “wow.” Right? And they are using the language that I have used to help them. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

The stories reveal how the modelling scaffold continues to impact future generations as positive modelling is brought forward to future classes and future generations. (Field Notes, May 28, 2016).

The Cost of being Relational

While staff expressed a desire to be relational, there were also moments when staff expressed frustration with the relational approach. Mr. Jackson was an advocate for relationships, but he also saw how working with the same group of students for the majority of the day could be trying on a teacher:

If you've got a particularly difficult group, it might be nice to have a little bit of a break in your day to work with some other people. And I think that was also nice... from a teacher's perspective, just for your own mental health side.

(Interview, May 26, 2016)

He added that when one could care for her or his own mental needs, she or he would be in a better position to care for others.

Mr. Gardiner wondered if the relational approach allowed students to work the system: "For some kids, they will say what they need to say." He believes students, "play us a little bit" (Interview, May 24, 2016). Mr. Baccus addressed these concerns, naming that this was a common refrain: "Some may look at it as, 'I can get away with things, they don't punish here.' That's not true, but I think some may look at it that way and try to push things" (Interview, April 6, 2016). He stressed that while some believe the school may have gone too far in the restorative direction, he did not believe students were getting away with things. He believed the relational approach had resulted in greater accountability and greater learning at the school.

In naming that kids "play us a little," it appeared that the teacher was seeking a system that does not allow students to "play" teachers, leaving discretionary decision-making in the hands of the staff member and thereby removing ownership from the

student. The frustration that students “play us” appeared to be associated with a lack of punishment. This was in contrast to staff members and students who articulated the power of giving students a voice. Some staff members struggled with the idea that matters of conflict could be resolved through dialogue, without a punitive consequence (Field Notes, May 25, 2016).

Theme #9: Learning and Restorative Practices

A primary goal for a school is to be a place of learning. As suggested earlier, many people immediately jumped to conflict and behaviour when applying restorative practices. Yet, there was also a continual narrative of how restorative practices enabled people to effectively engage students in the task of learning. This theme examines how the school community proactively uses restorative approaches, examining restorative pedagogy, conflict as learning, the need for relation as a foundation for learning, and the dilemma of supporting learning versus supporting students’ needs.

Restorative Practices Supporting Classroom Pedagogy

Restorative practices were employed by staff members to effectively deliver curriculum, noting that relational needs sometimes need to be addressed before the curriculum can be brought forward. Mr. Jackson expressed how social relationships cannot be excluded from learning, but rather the two must go hand in hand. In his class, he observed his students at odds about who would take on leadership in a certain group. He worked with students with exceptionalities, and often each of the students sought to do things his or her own way. “Dealing with that conflict all the time is something that they have had to learn, and I think the restorative practice model definitely helps” (Interview, May 26, 2016). Not only did responding to social needs support dealing with

conflict, but it also provided a positive foundation for student learning. Ms. Amherst has noted as principal that treating students as worthy is essential for learning to take place: “Adolescents really need to know that they are important. If they feel marginalized, they won’t learn anything” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She indicated that social cohesion with their teachers and peers supported students in working through mental health, emotional well-being, and curriculum. Teachers and students collaborating around expectations and success criteria allowed students to be owners in making their education meaningful. While he did state earlier that the restorative system can allow students to “play us a little bit” (Interview, May 24, 2016), Mr. Gardiner stressed that the restorative model is effective for supporting students to efficiently and effectively work through academic, relational, or behavioural problems, thereby building efficacy in students. He expressed that restoratively working through problems allows students to see problems as temporary, for the restorative process provides a system for naming problems, for developing a plan for moving forward, and for growing from the experience.

Circles were viewed as an effective way to support classroom learning. In speaking to circles, Mr. Baccus observed that circles create an effective social dynamic as students face each other and thereby give each of them an equitable perspective of their peers and their teacher. Mr. Hutchison expressed that circles could provide students a voice for sharing what they knew about a topic, what they wondered about a topic, or how they felt about a topic, though he was not inclined to use circles. Ms. Lewis felt that she used circles effectively the previous year for addressing curriculum, but this year that was not the case. Ms. Knight generally works with smaller groups of English language

learners. She supposed that restorative circles would be effective for increasing engagement in larger classroom settings:

If you are trying to bring out a new concept, or a new theme, or a new idea, having them in the circle format to introduce it and also to review new academic ideas and concepts... I think is a really neat way to teach because it really does force them all to be involved in thinking and adding to it. (Interview, May 31, 2016)

Mr. Jackson iterated that the social piece can be in place, but there must also be engagement with the learning. While the social part supports learning, students also must enjoy the learning. “If the excitement and interest is not there, it doesn’t matter who you are... it’s going to be... school’s going to be a struggle” (Interview, May 26, 2016).

Omar expressed that the part of school he loved was his teacher challenging him to be a better musician. This engaged him with his music. Likewise, he was engaged when he had the opportunity to support his peers to improve as musicians.

While she is an advocate for using circles to support students, Ms. Lewis disclosed that her class this year had been very difficult: unengaged in lessons and difficult to focus. The inability to employ the practices she believed in had been very frustrating. Most trying was using difficult moments as learning opportunities, for learning can occur at any time; but when students are not at their best it can be difficult to see any type of learning taking place. Viewing conflict as an opportunity for learning, as opposed to seeing conflict as preventing learning, is the focus of the next section.

Conflict as Learning

Mr. Carter stood out as an advocate for viewing responses to conflict as part of the learning process. He did not see conflict as hampering learning, but rather viewed conflict as an opportunity for leading students in learning. The following section highlights his theory of learning as it relates to learning and conflict.

Mr. Carter believed in the restorative process because of what students experience. He hoped that if students could reflect on past experiences—what they did, how they felt, and what was needed to move forward—they could pull from this experience the next time they were in a similar situation. His hope was that students were establishing a foundation that they could access in the future. He believed that experiencing the process was critical to long-term change. “When they go through it themselves, as opposed to just being told, they are really developing those skills. Even if they can’t access them right now, they are there, and they can just harvest” (Interview, March 30, 2016). In any situation, “no matter how messed up it is,” he wants to consider many questions including: “How can they learn?” “How can it be helpful for everyone involved?” and “What’s the solution?” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He believed his perspective comes from the fact that he is about teaching, and he wanted to use his experience to help students move toward learning how to resolve conflict and restore relationships. “I think you have to really want to teach, even when they mess up. If you just want them to be punished, then we’re probably in the wrong profession, right?” (Interview, March 30, 2016).

Other teachers expressed how they saw the value of learning that happened in conflict. Mr. Jackson appreciated that the restorative framework enabled students to deal

with conflict on their own rather than expecting a mediator or other party to resolve it. Ms. Knight explained how her ELL students sometimes found themselves in conflict situations because they were unaware of expectations due to culture, policies, or social etiquette. She used the restorative piece to respond to these situations: “There are definitely times where we will sit and talk about ‘what is something that happened?’ and ‘what they think about,’ and ‘what they think needs to be done differently,’ and ‘what would they do next time?’” (Interview, May 31, 2016). The restorative framework established by the restorative questions provided a safe place to dialogue, supporting the students in understanding their misconceptions or naiveties, in order that they could move forward.

Mr. Carter suggested that an important part of the process was helping students understand that when there was a problem, it was not just that they were in trouble, but rather, “You’re involved... they’re involved... let’s work it out” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He wanted students to know they were also part of problem-solving the solution to make things right. He expanded on this, stating that one of the values of the restorative questions and the restorative process is providing students with the opportunity to *reflect*:

I think kids when they are upset need a chance to process it and practice it. It won’t be like that everywhere when they get older, but if they can learn to do it now... when I get to other real-life situations, I have those skills, whether I realize it or not. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

Mr. Carter’s perspective stressed the need for students to take personal responsibility for responding to conflict and thereby establish tools for making better decisions in the future (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

Restoring Relation to Return to Learning

Ms. Frieze shared about how she viewed responses to conflict, sharing that effective responses were necessary to engage students in learning processes. She recalled a group of students arguing in the hallway on their way to the library. She noted that another student came in laughing, and she was not comfortable with the situation. When she addressed the students, they stated that the situation was over and there was nothing to worry about. She asked the teacher about the class and he also stated that it was dealt with, as the student had already gone to speak with a member of the behavioural team. Yet, in her eyes there clearly was still something not right, observing that the resolution had not been a full resolution and that there were deeper issues involved. She sent some of the students off to the behaviour specialist, and it was discovered that the situation had not been handled well; there were much deeper issues. She stated how her mindset has changed in regard to responding to issues such as this:

That is one thing that would have never happened before this [restorative practices]. Like I would have swept that conflict aside and prioritized the academics. Now I will prioritize the conflict, because I understand that the learning can't occur first. So, I will like... I will do that in front of a teacher. Like I will say to the teacher, "I am sorry, but we cannot begin this until this is solved." And some staff are OK with that, and some staff don't understand. (Interview, May 30, 2016)

Other staff spoke to the need to address underlying issues if students and teachers are going to be effective in the learning process. Mr. Devine deemed that "When the student feels like their [sic] teacher hasn't forgiven them or that their teacher has these negative

feelings toward them, I think that makes it very difficult for students to learn” (Interview, April 14, 2016). He added that repairing damage from conflict has a positive impact on a student’s classroom learning. Mr. Gardiner expressed how conflict can be a result of the student and teacher being exhausted from working on learning and ultimately lead to frustrations on the part of both the student and the teacher. “You have tried every method that you can think of... and they are not getting it and you are not getting it... you are exhausted” (Interview, May 24, 2016). He expressed how in this situation relationships can be broken. He found that he needed to step back, look at the bigger picture, and work to restore the relationship to get back to student attitudes that would support learning. Similarly, Mr. Carter recognized that many of his conversations with students revolved around emotions, self-image, and self-esteem. He grew in his need to work with underlying issues when supporting students. Ms. Amherst, working out of the restorative philosophy, started working with some of her staff to create modules that related underlying issues to the restorative philosophy. Themes included resiliency, the immigrant experience, trauma, self-regulation, and the need for community. She admitted that other demands including labour disputes and curricular changes prevented the modules from being delivered to the entire staff, but the hope was to continue to build capacity in staff for responding to issues that students face daily so they can continue thriving in the learning process.

Is More Class Time Always Better?

Time in class and time on task were clearly a key part of the language of the school culture. Ms. Amherst described how instructional time was protected at the school, resulting in greater learning for every child. She stated, “And I think happy kids

are learning kids” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She added that often staff members will not seek to have students punished when in conflict situations because being home means less time learning. Likewise, Mr. Baccus saw students out of class less and issues resolved more quickly, thereby believing that learning must have increased at the school. He did not have hard data to back this up, but anecdotally he observed happy students who wanted to be in class. Nonetheless, Ms. Ennie questioned the legitimacy of always pushing students toward class. While she recognized that students needed to be in class, and appreciated the benefits of students being in class, she also saw instances where she felt that students would benefit from time out of class. She felt some students would benefit from time away from class speaking to an adult, or from time simply to be. She described the scenario as a double-edged sword, battling student needs versus getting them back to class to learn. Her view underscored preceding paragraphs that spoke to the importance of meeting needs to be able to learn effectively. Mr. Carter noted that one’s use of restorative practices reflects one’s pedagogy and how one views education. In response to Mr. Carter’s statement, I considered that the results one wants from teaching and learning are reflected in one’s epistemology of learning and how to best go about making learning happen. I noted that one’s epistemology may differ from a restorative approach. In challenging one’s views, restorative approaches may be a philosophy that one avoids rather than embraces (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

Theme #10: A Culture Revealed

Culture is reflected in what the people do and how they interact. This theme extends how I as the researcher, and members of the school community, observed and experienced the culture, or the doing of restorative practices at the school. The theme

includes reflections on where the school was versus where it is at now, markers of change, safety and the culture, how people determined the culture had changed, measuring culture change, students and the culture, a culture of respect, perceptions of a diluted restorative culture, and finally asking, “how restorative are we?”

Where We Have Been and Where We Are: The Restorative Journey

The two administrators and two support staff described the school as punitive when they arrived there. Ms. Amherst recalled staff members sending students to her and stating, “I’m sending this kid to the office... he needs a suspension” (Interview, April 26, 2016). She also recalled there being little in the way of investigation into what the deeper issues were regarding conflict and why certain behaviours were happening. The same students came to the office “over and over.” Mr. Baccus remembered the school previously being known for being negative and punitive. Mr. Devine recollected a very heavy-handed approach to responding to behaviour, with consequences that seemed “a bit severe” (Interview, April 14, 2016). Furthermore, he felt that the techniques used were not that effective in changing the situation. In terms of responding to behaviour, Mr. Carter recalled that students did not have to own their decisions or the results or aftermath of those decisions. He believed that this approach resulted in perpetuating an individual as a bully, for one could serve time away from school and then return with no accountability measures. While a suspension was intended to modify the behaviour of the student, ultimately there appeared to be minimal measures that supported the student in making productive changes (Field Notes, March 30, 2016). On the other hand, teacher Mr. Hutchison posed that small conflicts were dealt with more harshly in the past, setting an example for other students. He saw more recent minor instances of inappropriate

behaviour being ignored now. Thus, he experienced an increase in minor infractions by an increased number of students. He believed that increasing the severity of punishment would deter other students from committing similar infractions for fear of receiving the same punishment (Field Notes, May 24, 2016).

Two staff members made note of changes they had observed, specifically among the staff. Mr. Baccus recalled that people spoke of a divide amongst the staff when he arrived and that outsiders told him to “be careful of [school name]” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He was experiencing a much more cohesive staff at the time of the interview than he did when he arrived at the school. Mr. Devine remembered thinking he had made a mistake when he transferred to the school, specifically due to negativity amongst the staff. He watched the culture change from negative to positive, as he observed staff becoming more accepting to new ideas and to each other’s ideas. He attributed the change to Ms. Amherst bringing in restorative practices, remarking that some staff left, leaving room for others to be hired on who desired to work with restorative practices. This supported the climate becoming much more positive. Likewise, Mr. Gardiner recalled a restorative vision that upheld: “This is what is good for kids and you: just do it” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Over time he viewed fewer and fewer staff who were outliers to this vision. He recalled how days used to start negatively at the school, and staff would carry that negative attitude with them. Over time, as attitudes became more positive, it translated into the attitudes of the staff. ““Hey, did you see what so and so is doing?’ ‘We should try this!’ ‘Let’s do that!’ ‘Oh yeah, I should try that too.’ It just kind of catches people, that momentum” (Interview, May 24, 2016). As attitudes became more

positive, these staff watched their colleagues buy into the restorative vision set out by school leadership.

Markers of Restorative Change

Staff members articulated the markers of change they had observed through the process of implementing restorative practices. These milestones were tangible evidence of the culture the leadership was trying to generate. Mr. Carter expressed how participating in our research interview would have been impossible when he first arrived at the school:

There would be calls, people being sent out... for not having pencils, not having paper... there was just no patience. Obviously from a teacher perspective, it is frustrating. You plan this lesson, you are here, you give them clear instructions, and people are going astray. I feel like the culture has changed because we have just been educated a lot more. They really understand that asking a kid, “Why did you do that?” might be the worst thing, because they don’t know why. They did it, and it was dumb, and now you get to help them figure it out, right? Something as simple as that I think has eliminated a lot of problems.... And a lot of conflict... like power struggles. I don’t think students are being challenged in the same way, to be honest. I feel like teachers aren’t yelling at students as much, and I think that changes a lot. (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He viewed that current students at the school were given more of a voice to make choices. The openness to the voice of all participants created a culture where people in the school—students, support staff, teachers, and administration—are more open to suggestions. Mr. Devine believed that creating a safe culture was critical, for he viewed

that individuals who felt safe making suggestions then also felt safe to seek help from others, specifically staff members. Asking for help resulted in individuals making their needs known, which allowed other members in the community to address those needs.

Administration spoke to how changes implemented by school leadership became the culture, or the norm. Ms. Amherst noted that norms are not reflected in titles, but rather norms are the culture that members of the school community act in, and act on, each day. In speaking to the culture of the school, she stated, “With restorative practices, it’s not a thing, it’s a way of being. It’s normalized in our school...I mean the kids may not know it as restorative practices, they just know it as the way we do business around here” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Mr. Baccus noted that restorative practices had now been at the school longer than any of the students. He referred to the change made recently to have students not eat on the gymnasium floor: “Our grade 6s don’t know otherwise. They don’t ever know eating on the floor. So, when they are in grade 8, we’ll have a whole school of kids that have never sat on the gym floor and eaten” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He sees this as incredibly positive, but also noted that this means being patient to allow time to take its course as changes become the culture. Ms. Amherst also spoke to how changes became norms. She believed the change process started with her vision, grew to the leadership team, expanded to staff, and then was brought to students. The vision became the norm, or as Ms. Amherst stated, “The culture is the culture.” She recalled that the transition from staff viewing restorative practices as a vision of the principal to staff perceiving restorative practices as something that was good for the school was a major transition in the process. As changes became norms, the responses by

the staff came out of the new norms, reflecting the new culture they know and thereby work out of (Field Notes, April 27, 2016).

Mr. Devine relayed a story of watching a colleague using restorative practices. He did not expect this teacher would attempt to use circles, and yet the teacher expressed that the circles were effective for building relationships, getting to know students, and for supporting his teaching. Mr. Devine was most impressed by the connections the teacher and the students made:

Those kids really responded to him. They were really strongly connected to him, and they did not want to let him down. I found that was really powerful because some of the kids were difficult and because he had high expectations, and [because] he had developed positive relationships with them, they would want to live up to his expectations. Some kids who got in trouble all the time were suddenly never in trouble. But I don't think that would have been possible without him having this community circle weekly... he had them weekly, to get to know his students better. I sort of feel that kids had this opportunity to say, "Here is something that is good that is happening to me," and "here is something that is not good that is happening to me," and he would listen. And he gave everybody an opportunity to speak. So, I think for me that's the story that sticks in my mind the most. And I think it is very powerful... when I heard him telling other people how good it was, that was the thing that really surprised me the most. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

The story demonstrates the potential for change in staff members, even when leading some staff members toward a vision seems like an impossible task (Field Notes, April 14, 2016).

Finally, Ms. Amherst witnessed change in how parents took to restorative practices. She was fearful that in a litigious society, parents would want no part of the restorative process. Her fear was that parents would not encourage their children to be honest for fear of the potential ramifications including suspension or being arrested. She thought, “There is no way they are going to allow their kid to sit in front of other adults and kids and say, ‘yup, I did that... this is what I did... It is something very bad... this is how I feel... this is why I did it’” (Interview, April 26, 2016). From her perspective, after a few large formal conferences, she noticed parents asking for conferences where major issues such as bullying were being addressed. One regret of Ms. Amherst is that parents have their children move on to other schools where restorative conferences are not an option. She is incredibly thankful for the parents’ willingness to be a part of the process but discouraged that students and parents may face more punitive measures at other schools. I noted the parallels between the trust created between individuals within the school and the trust that restorative practices allowed between the school community and with people from outside of the school (Field Notes, April 26, 2016).

Mr. Devine stressed that the school needed to continue to educate parents in restorative practices, as the concepts of taking responsibility for one’s actions or of trying to repair relationships may be foreign to parents. He believed this was reflected in the school’s values; as the school communicated how they would respond to situations, they needed to also express the values they were trying to uphold when responding in a

restorative way. Families needed to experience consistency between values and processes (Field Notes, April 16, 2016). Mr. Baccus has experienced parents who were not on board with what the school was doing: “So while we may be very restorative—we are thinking, ‘let’s get the restorative mindset going’—at home it may still be the punitive approach, or maybe the ‘do what you want approach’.” He has had students tell him that the way he responds at school is not the way their parents would respond at home. He recognized that one of the areas that needed to continue to grow was a consistent message for students from both school and home.

Safety

Students spoke about the safety at their school and the security they felt as students at the school. Rania felt safe at her school and believed her school was a place where students thrived. Safia believed her school was secure, noting the camera that watched people enter and exit the building. While students felt the school was safe, they also agreed that bullying still existed. Both Nasir and Omar acknowledged that there could be physical bullying but that bullying was more likely to be verbal, some of which could be very subtle. Nasir spoke to cyberbullying: “A lot of people are getting cyberbullied, but nobody can stop it because they [the school] are outnumbered” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Rania expressed how she believed there was a fine line between friendly pushing and bullying. She appreciated that her school took bullying very seriously and that students stepped up to support their friends if derogatory comments were seen on social media. Omar expressed that physical bullying could also be subtle, and there were times when no one noticed the bullying that took place. Nasir and Omar expressed how people in the school stepped in when they observed bullying, though

Nasir admitted that it was not easy to step in and take a stand. Rania upheld that it was a close community that stepped up to support others when they were being bullied. The student responses to bullying correlated with the principal's earlier words whereby the vision was to create a school where students take account for their own actions and for the actions of others, though students also expressed that fulfilling this vision required courage (Field Notes, April 27, 2016).

When speaking about school safety, each of the six students spoke to how there was a high school in close proximity to their school and that they were not always comfortable with students they did not know being close to their school grounds. They debated who was responsible for monitoring spaces where students from both schools might interact, specifically outside of school hours. While Safia wanted constant monitoring during the school day, Omar stated that the school could not be on watch all the time. Students expressed that the dividing line between the high school and the middle school was not well defined and that occasionally during the day high school students ended up in fields or play areas that the students thought were theirs. This appeared to be an issue that warranted dialogue between the middle school administration, the high school administration, and the students (Field Notes, May 27, 2016).

How do We Know the Culture is Different?

While school leadership sought to create a restorative culture, the question still remained: "How does leadership know they are fulfilling the restorative vision?" Ms. Amherst spoke to how, as principal, she has seen changes in the culture. From her perspective, "People are just happier. Kids are happier. Staff is happier" (Interview, April

26, 2016). She expressed that she does not see students in the office very often, and this has allowed staff members to direct energies away from behaviour and toward better things. Ms. Amherst viewed the use of circles, the use of the restorative questions, and increased student leadership as markers of the change in the culture. She stated that though they have not tracked data, she believed the data would demonstrate a decrease in suspension rates, a decrease in students visiting the office, and diminished recidivism, revealed through a decrease in students making repeat visits to the office. Furthermore, she believed student absenteeism was down and that marks were higher. She expressed that “anecdotally,” much of this comes from teachers “owning” their kids and effectively responding to students at the classroom level. While she deemed that the culture at the school had improved, one of her keys to knowing that the culture had changed was the reaction of people from outside the school: “People who kind of came in from other places, they notice” (Interview, April 26, 2016). The following section speaks to different populations who remarked about the culture at the school.

Parents. Ms. Amherst shared how one parent noted how restorative practices at the school were impacting her children. She stated that the parent said:

I picked this program because not only is it a great program, but your school is a restorative school... these are the issues my child has had in the past and it hasn't been restorative. We think the way that you guys operate here... I want my kid to be at this school. (Interview, April 26, 2016)

The restorative philosophy was shared during parent evenings or school tours, though Ms. Amherst stated that it was not explicitly written in policy or written in handbooks. Thus, parents generally heard of restorative approaches through interactions with the

school rather than through handbooks or school media. Ms. Amherst noted that when students were happy, then the parents were happy.

New teachers. Ms. Amherst shared how it was people that were new to the culture that saw the difference in the school, whether they were permanent teachers or supply teachers. While teachers who had been at the school for a while may have reprimanded a student for misbehaving, teachers coming in from other schools often did not see the student's actions as misbehaviour, depending on the culture they had come from. What is misbehavior in one culture is not necessarily unacceptable in another culture (Field Notes, April 26, 2016). She noted that some teachers who came to the school with a restorative practices background also viewed behaviours in a different way, not always responding like people who had been in the school culture over a long period. Staff members responded to situations that deviated from what they deemed to be the cultural norms (Field Notes, April 26, 2016).

Staff members shared their experiences of entering the building for the first time and how they experienced a new cultural norm in the school. Ms. Ennie remembered walking in: "I have never been to a school that... the first day that I came here, when I said 'hi' to students, they said 'hi' back" (Interview, May 4, 2016). (This was also my experience as a researcher.) This was not her experience in previous schools where students walked by with an attitude of "I'll say hi if I have to." She viewed the ability to uphold high expectations—such as policies on the use of electronic devices or limiting students from wandering the halls—as directly correlated with the leadership of the administration. She was also shocked by how staff in the school knew students and knew where students should be. She saw this a testament to everyone on staff being on board

with the learning vision, from educational assistants to the administration. Mr. Jackson also spoke to how the school culture was incredibly different in this school. He stated that in his previous school, “there was not a restorative model. The behaviour TA was in the office all the time, sitting with as many as 20 students, sitting there trying to be quiet, right?” (Interview, May 26, 2016). Staff members recognized the school culture as positive when they compared it to previous school cultures they had experienced (Field Notes, May 26, 2016).

Students. Another way that the leadership of the school gauged the change in the culture of the school was the response by students who were new to the school. Ms. Amherst described a story of a student who came to the school in grade 7 or 8 rather than with the grade 6 students. In her experience, students who did not understand the restorative mindset stuck out like a sore thumb, expressing, “What’s going on here?” She found that she needed to lead her staff, reminding them that their culture was different and that new students needed time to adjust. Even when cultures were positive, students needed time to adapt to how to work in that environment (Field Notes, April 28, 2016).

The restorative culture was also seen by Ms. Amherst through students who came back to the school after graduating. Alumni were told they were always welcome to come back and that they could take advantage of the support structures in place at their former school. Students would come back to speak to their former teachers and support staff, though the principal did not articulate how many students did this (Field Notes, April 26, 2016).

Measuring Change: Restorative Data

Mr. Gardiner spoke at length about the need for more data regarding the effectiveness of restorative practices at the school. He believed that restorative practices had tremendous value, citing the value of restorative practices in impacting culture.

So, where do companies spend a lot more time?... *Culture!* The more and more you spend on that... restorative practices then plays into that... right? We spend too much time on technology... changing environments... changing grade levels... teaching... do you know what I mean. All these other things. We are really... I think that if you have a positive constructive culture, all of that stuff takes care of itself. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

Yet to evaluate the school's progress he believed more data were needed. He stressed the need for an anchoring point, asking key questions including: "Where are you?" "Where do you want to get to?" and "How are we going to get there?" (Interview, May 24, 2016). He posited that baselines and data allow for goal setting, evaluating goals, and revisiting goals for continually strategizing how to move forward. He questioned whether goals were effectively established initially that allowed members of the school community to be working toward the same vision in terms of both restorative responses to behaviour and restorative practices in learning.

While he desired a greater investment in restorative practices by administration, he also recognized that this was a difficult proposition, for administration "are getting fed a million different things too, right?" (Interview, May 24, 2016). He cited the initiative of the Ontario government to have 60 minutes of math per day in classrooms as another plate that administrators needed to balance. With too many plates, something had to drop.

When decisions were made at the board level or the Ministry of Education level mandating new systems or processes, then the school had to drop other plates to meet the new mandates. Mr. Gardiner saw the investment in restorative practices as one of the plates that now seemed to be off the table.

Mr. Baccus also spoke to the need for data. While he felt more students were in class, that problem solving conflict was more effective and more efficient, that suspension numbers were down, and that learning was more effective, he added that: “Maybe that’s the next step, to quantify the results.” The feeling of both Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Baccus was that the anecdotal positive feeling of the school culture needed to be verified by specific data.

The Students in the Culture

Teachers, support staff, and students spoke to how they believed that students revealed the culture that existed in the school. Ms. Ennie viewed the students as incredibly polite. Mr. Carter observed that students were themselves, engaged in school, playing with peers, and “doing stuff together” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He described the students as kindhearted, stating that they did not really have malicious students at the school. While Mr. Hutchison has seen occasional acts of bullying, he also stated that “for the most part, the students are really well behaved here” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Ms. Knight put it simply: “It is a great school: great people, great kids” (Interview, May 31, 2016). She added that she appreciated how the diversity in the school in terms of both ethnicity and socioeconomic levels created a great community amongst the student body. “We just have kids who come from so many different backgrounds that I think they just... jive, and they learn to accept so many differences” (Interview, May 31, 2016).

Likewise, students appreciated the diversity at the school. Parelle welcomed that “there isn’t just one neutral colour in this school” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). He liked the diversity and the opportunity to learn from people who are from more than one culture, stating, “it makes more sense” (Focus Group, April 27, 2016). Omar felt that the positive attitude toward diversity explained why everyone was welcome in his school. Hanna believed that the welcoming attitude of both teachers and students reflected the school spirit. Safia indicated that she attended a great school and that she needed to be thankful for the place where she learned each day.

In speaking to why they perceived students to be so great, staff members attributed this to many factors that could be found outside of the school. Ms. Knight attributed the great students to how families raise their children. Ms. Ennie viewed the students at the school as less rambunctious than other places she had taught. She wondered if parents had a tighter rein on their children here than they might in other communities. She was willing to attribute the students being very polite to the demographics of the students and to how parents did not tolerate a lot from their children. Hence, the student behaviour was very good. I noted that when speaking specifically about how great students were at the school, these staff members expressed a rationale that was outside of the school’s control rather than attributing any portion to the staff and the school culture itself (Field Notes, June 1, 2016).

A Culture of Respect

Mr. Baccus spoke frequently about his desire for a culture of respect amongst students, amongst staff, and in student–staff relations. He accepted that not everyone was going to be friends, but he desired that everyone respected everyone else.

Ideally, I tell kids, “If you could all be friends, it’d be great, and make my job a lot easier.” But that’s unrealistic. But if you can all respect each other’s rights to be at this school, and to be in any given space in this building, that’s the best we can probably hope for: respecting each other’s right to exist in this school. So, I would say, once I see that kids or a group of kids can avoid conflict, be in the same space, I think we have probably fixed that relationship as best we can.

(Interview, April 6, 2016)

He had observed this same need for respect amongst the staff members. He recalled a staff member stating that she needed her colleagues to be honest and to not talk behind her back. He knew that not all his staff members saw eye-to-eye on everything, but if they were able to honour each other’s space and respect each other’s right to be at the school and to do their job, then he viewed this as positive. Mr. Gardiner iterated the same philosophy, desiring students that were respectful of each other and of their teachers. He understood that students may not like everyone they encounter at school, but respecting each individual was important to him.

A Diluted Culture

Staff and students appreciated the place where they taught and learned each day, upholding the positive culture of their school. Yet, in terms of being a fully restorative school, staff expressed concern. Ms. Knight explained that staff members were constantly

turning over, but that investment in new staff with regard to restorative practices was not keeping up with this turnover. In trying to describe the current restorative culture, she stated, “I feel like it is getting *diluted*. I guess that’s the best word” (Interview, May 31, 2016). This section examines other staff members’ concerns with the culture and suggests reasons beyond training itself for the dilution staff were experiencing.

Three of the teachers and two of the support staff spoke to the need to have restorative practices be a school-wide endeavor, for without that practice they believed the school would never be able to uphold its full potential as a restorative school. Mr. Jackson, Ms. Knight, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Ennie, and Ms. Frieze spoke to how the philosophy was not implemented school wide. Mr. Devine said that he saw culture shifts in classrooms, but not in the whole building. Ms. Knight also believed that the practice had impacted certain classrooms and certain individuals, but she hesitated to say the school was a restorative school. In those classrooms where it was used regularly by educators who had grasped onto the restorative practices, she saw positive impact on both community building and on learning. She spoke passionately about the need for the practice to be used more by staff. In her estimation, 50% of the teachers responded to students in restorative ways, and a handful used circles on a regular basis. Like the principal, Ms. Knight also noted that with new initiatives coming down, changes in leadership over time, and with other pressures that needed to be addressed, restorative practices appeared not to be a priority. Mr. Jackson believed there was a need to continue to bring people on board, though he was unsure as to how best to go about that. While there was a need to do restorative practices in a better way, staff also wanted to know what it looked like when it is was *really* working. Ms. Ennie desired to know if it was

working at the school, and what did “working” look like at other schools? “Is it actually making a difference?” (Interview, May 4, 2016). Ms. Knight also expressed that she had never heard of a school where everyone was on board. She wanted to know if there was a school out there where restorative practices was a daily priority, and what did that look like.

Mr. Hutchison, who shared earlier that he has had minimal restorative training, was honest about how he did not use restorative practices. When asked if he had questions about restorative practices, he responded:

To be honest, I don’t really think about restorative practices that often to have questions about it. When I hear about things in the school that have happened and you see the students sort of back in class... just being around the school just sort of after they have done something—relatively shortly after—that’s when I have questions like, “What went on?...What happened in those conversations?” ... or that sort of thing that showed you they kind of understood what they did was wrong and hopefully it won’t happen again in the future. To just think about questions about... honestly, I don’t really think about it. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

He added that he felt that restorative practices did not fit with who he was. He said that while he cared about how students were doing, to sit in a circle and to ask those questions was not how he operated: “It would come off as not being authentic, and not being real, and then I think that they would pick up on that as well” (Interview, May 24, 2016). He believed that if he was not authentic, the students then were also not authentic, which

ruined the restorative process. This teacher felt that it was better that he did not engage in practices such as circles for his classroom to be effective (Field Notes, May 24, 2016).

Ms. Knight saw barriers that prevented the philosophy from being fully implemented, which concerned her. Her feeling was that in a larger school there would always be barriers, and therefore a school would always have people who adopted new practices—restorative or otherwise—and would always have naysayers where “the philosophy doesn’t jive with them” (Interview, May 31, 2016). The following sections examine barriers to implementing a fully restorative culture including time, power, and the limitations of an individual.

Limited by time. Three support staff members and two teachers spoke to the need for time when addressing major issues at the school. Mr. Gardiner has previously spent time as a support teacher and recognized that teachers with a full classroom of students do not have time to interact, especially one-on-one. In the case of an incident, while a restorative philosophy promotes dialogue between the teacher and student, commitments including teaching, meetings, and supervision prevented this. In his view, “that teacher is almost handcuffed by the way the structure of a school is, that you can’t take 45 minutes out of your teaching day, to sit down and have a heart to heart.... work through some problems with a kid” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Ms. Ennie spoke to the same concern, observing that her colleagues took on more and more roles at school, and so opportunities for dialoguing and counselling became less and less. The dialogue that was necessary for supporting a student’s needs often could not happen (Field Notes, May 4, 2016).

Ms. Frieze spoke strongly about how a lack of time inhibited effective processes. To run a restorative circle in a classroom to resolve conflict meant taking time away from curriculum. This required both flexibility in terms of delivery, or maybe even content, which she expressed that some teachers struggled with. When major conflict was dealt with through the office, it was a time commitment to interview teachers and to have teachers involved in the circle. Restorative practices dictate that everyone who participates in a formal restorative circle for resolving conflict needs to agree to be involved and should be interviewed prior to participating. The interview allows participants to know what questions are going to be asked and to think through answers prior to the actual circle, which could be an emotional encounter. Whether pulling teachers out of class or having the circle after school, both required a time investment by the teacher. She recalled a circle process where interviews had not been done and then new information came out during the circle that inhibited the circle from being effective. In her words: “That is not anyone’s fault... it is just time” (Interview, May 30, 2016). Ms. Knight also spoke to a circle process that went awry because of time:

Corners were cut, and people that should have been involved weren’t involved. People that should have been there, weren’t there...And it fell apart. You really have to follow it to a tee. But it does require a ton of time and preparation, and it is a very hard thing to do at this school when all of your teachers are teaching, your kids are in class, getting parents involved, meeting with parents, interviewing parents, preparing parents... it is a lot of time to try to do that within your school day when really we are supposed to be teaching. (Interview, May 31, 2016)

While the circle did not go well, she learned the value of preconferecing with participants to establish a strong foundation for dialogue during the circle. Future circles she was involved in improved due to what she learned in this instance. Mr. Carter expressed how broken processes harmed the restorative philosophy at the school. In his eyes, “there is nothing worse than a restorative piece, turned punitive or one-sided...or goes into monologue form” (Interview, March 30, 2016). A restorative process that went wrong not only impacted participants but also impacted individuals’ ability to trust the process in the future. I noted that when practices led to wasted time or harmed participants, then the likelihood of the practices being trusted in the future were much less likely (Field Notes, March 30, 2016).

Mr. Gardiner expressed his concern regarding leadership providing time for teachers to invest in restorative practices. His view was that “when you say it is important, you gotta make it important” (Interview, May 24, 2016). He found it difficult to take time during the summer, during evenings, or on weekends to do professional development. He realized it was not easy to make time for teachers, but he also believed that leadership in schools needed to invest in their people. Part of his rationale was that he also spent a lot of time, outside of class time, investing in the school. If it was a priority, then he wanted to see more investment during school time instead of outside of school time.

Limited by views of power. Mr. Baccus shared how some staff members struggled with the *with* philosophy of restorative practices. In his experience, some teachers still upheld a philosophy of “I’m the teacher... and the student has to do what I say and they can’t question me,” or “I’m a teacher...I ask them something, they have to

do it” (Interview, April 6, 2016). He watched these same teachers struggle with the idea of putting themselves in the shoes of their students and considering their students’ needs. He supposed their reluctance was likely grounded in fear of change. He added: “Some teachers are still reluctant to do that [work in the restorative mindset], because they are still in the ‘I’m the teacher, you are the student model’ which I think... 21st century, we’ve got to get past that” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Likewise, he also worked with students who had experienced this philosophy whereby they articulated, “They’re the teacher, I’m just the kid” (Interview, April 6, 2016). Students felt helpless because some teachers did not engage in dialoguing or they failed to address the needs of the students. Nasir confirmed the sense of helplessness that students can experience: “[I need teachers] to listen, and ‘cause sometimes when you aren’t at your best... they just tells [sic] you... they don’t listen to what is wrong” (Focus Group, May 27, 2016). Mr. Carter viewed the act of asking effective questions—*what?* instead of *why?*—as changing student–teacher power dynamics, and he believed that the simple act of changing a question could have a tremendous impact on the culture of the school, simply by asking for a story with the question rather than accusing with the question.

Limitations when one reaches her/his limits. A teacher expressed that teachers experience situations that exceed their limitations, going beyond that which a teacher is willing to or able to cope with. Teachers invested in students with time and energy, but there were times when a teacher could not invest any more. Mr. Hutchison expressed that he has a picture of what he is willing to handle and what the office needs to handle. While he was willing to work through situations where students pushed and shoved, more major incidents were sent to administrators and behaviour specialists. Mr. Hutchison had

spent some time supporting teachers in the past. He knew when some teachers called down for support that they were at the end of their rope and needed help. Unfortunately, as articulated earlier, getting the teacher and the student together for a dialogue could be difficult once the student had been sent out of the classroom (Field Notes, May 24, 2016).

A Restorative Façade or Bound by the Culture?

When speaking to culture, some believed that the culture was diluted and that restorative practices were not that effective. Others felt that some were so entrenched in the culture, they did not see how effective it was. Only when outsiders came in were people able to appreciate the culture they experienced each day. Staff expressed their concerns about the future of restorative practices and how it could be continued to be developed and used. Ms. Amherst shared her concern that administrators are often moved every 5 years and that as principal she could be moved soon. While she believed the work would not end if she left, she also recognized the need to continue to invest in restorative practices at the school. She had been considering how circles could be used with the new math curriculum to create dialogue around mathematics and to allow both the demands of employing restorative practices and the demand of sixty minutes of math a day to work together in harmony. Mr. Devine wondered if restorative practices were a fad or if they were here to stay. He expressed how restorative practices came from First Nation's traditions, and so schools were working with an old idea that has gone and come again. He wondered if history might repeat itself. He also pondered how feeder schools and high schools that work with the middle school could integrate restorative practices so students had a more balanced K–12 experience in regard to experiencing and using restorative

practices. Finally, Mr. Carter stressed that it was not always perfect, but that restorative practices as a culture were good:

I hope more people do it and understand there's nothing to be afraid of. And it's not perfect though... that's the honest truth. We're not perfect as a species, so this practice isn't perfect... just because people are going to do what they want, right?

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

For the culture to continue to develop, there needed to be continual investment by everyone in the culture, specifically leadership (Field Notes, April 26, 2016).

Theme #11: Celebrating the Story

A leadership strategy that Ms. Amherst sought to employ was to celebrate the learning and successes happening at her school. This theme examines celebration as a strategy employed by leadership for changing the culture to be more restorative. When she arrived, Ms. Amherst did not observe a culture of celebration. She found that many staff members and many students were not comfortable with accepting that they were good at something, and they did not believe that others should know about the fantastic things that were happening at their school. She went into classrooms and tweeted about the learning taking place in classrooms. People were excited to have their work shared, and the greater community started to notice the work happening at the school, responding positively to the learning they were seeing. She recalled telling a staff member he was doing great work and encouraged him to share what was happening. The staff member was surprised by this. When asked why, he noted that in the past he had tried to share the learning that was happening in his classroom and he felt shot down by previous administration. She now was encouraging staff to have events so the community could

experience firsthand what students were doing. In a world of social media, people outside of the school, outside of the board, and outside of the country could be a part of the learning taking place at the school.

As people were celebrated, Ms. Amherst noted that they were willing to take more risks. If risks were successful, people celebrated, and if risks did not come to fruition, people moved on. She viewed that celebration was now an integral part of the culture. She saw people posting learning in hallways or on social media, making learning a public feature at the school. Mr. Carter spoke of weekly assemblies where “we celebrate class, team, and individual successes... The whole school is there” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He realized that even in a smaller school, people do not know what is going on in other parts of the school. Students could see what was happening in the school whether it was music, basketball, chess, or robotics.

A video was produced to celebrate the school’s work with restorative practices. Mr. Carter believed that the video was an opportunity to get people involved and engaged with restorative practices and the work being done at the school. Others did not see the video as an opportunity for celebration. Rather, they saw it as a misrepresentation of the restorative work actually being done at the school. Mr. Carter recalled how people from both inside and outside the school mocked the video. He remembered sarcastic remarks such as “look at this superstar,” or “look at you guys” (Interview, March 30, 2016). He felt they saw it as a public relations stunt rather than upholding the work being done at the school. Ms. Lewis remembered thinking the video was too much and did not articulate the actual restorative work being done in the school. This saddened her, because she felt that the school had staff who could really make an impact on students

through restorative practices. Regardless of feelings toward the video, Ms. Amherst was thankful that the video provided opportunities for dialoguing with other organizations and for sharing with other groups.

Theme #12: Research as Professional Development

While research is often upheld as a neutral process, people remarked throughout the process that the research changed how they thought about restorative practices. Mr. Carter noted during his interview that the interview process allowed him to reflect on aspects of restorative practices that he generally did not consider, affirming his use of daily restorative practices:

This is really intriguing. Even though you are just asking questions, it is still good to converse and talk about it, 'cause we don't get to talk about it as much. You practice it, you exercise it, but to kind of look at it... it has helped me to revisit why I do it and why I support it... just hearing it out loud. It's pretty cool.

(Interview, March 30, 2016)

Following our interview, Ms. Frieze sent me an e-mail explaining how the research interview had changed her response to a student situation. The following is the text of that e-mail:

I tried to catch you on Tuesday and then the week escaped me but I wanted to share what happened after I met with you. I came upstairs and began class and one student was visibly upset. He wouldn't share what was bothering him until I asked a few times what had happened and after about 10 min he came up and said he would only share outside the classroom in privacy. It turned out on the way to school a student from his class had made comments about his new hair and he

was hurt, mad, etc. She had said it looked like someone else's, which the comment came with many assumptions based on that student's reputation with behavior, character, etc. Once we spoke, I went through the restorative process (questions, apology from student, etc.) which was really positive. The student who apologized was in tears even when we were speaking about how it impacted the victim. Basically, the comment wasn't meant the way it was received, but the person who made the comment knew it was taken incorrectly and still chose not to do anything about it. An apology was made and accepted and most importantly a good discussion about how the "perpetrator" (I know this is not the right word -- but for lack of a better word) could act differently next time. It took a total of 7 minutes but after that the 'victim' worked till the end of the school day, helped others in the class and produced some pretty good work.

A few reflections came from this:

- 1) I am pretty sure if this wasn't dealt with in this way the 'victim' would have done no work, created problems and in another situation, may been removed for being disruptive or disrespectful.
- 2) The 'victim's' voice was heard and therefore relationship strengthened between me and that student
- 3) Other students [were] made aware this behavior is not tolerated (despite happening before school, off school property)
- 4) *I am 100% positive I would have dealt with this differently if I hadn't just come from the interview with you* - I would have dealt with it, but with an exploration of events and an apology, but lacking the focus on the role of how the victim felt and

how the other student should act in the future which LIGHTBULB MOMENT:

The reason Restorative Practices is not as successful in the school as it could be, is because teachers aren't doing it, then sharing their experiences and therefore it's not in the forefront of their mind. Once it's part of a daily dialogue, and you're hearing people's stories, one is more likely to try it, share it, use it, etc. (e-mail from support staff member, June 2, 2016)

It was humbling to know that a student was impacted by the interview. I was struck by how both staff members spoke to how the interview process itself was a dialogue, and that by dialoguing, the topic of restorative practices became front and center in one's mind. This reminded me of my field notes from April 26, 2016, speaking to the need of continual investment by leadership in order to build and maintain a culture. By engaging in dialogue these staff members were able to reflect on their knowledge of restorative practices, thereby using more restorative philosophy and ultimately having an impact on the community (Field Notes, June 3, 2016).

A final person spoke to the impact of the research process. As we sat in our student focus group, Safia uttered words that spoke to the power of dialogue that happened in the focus group circle and that happened daily for her in her classes.

And also, we are having one right now, a circle. We are sharing all of our ideas right now, and we wait for everyone to speak, and then maybe add on to their sentences and related things... so that's kind of my experience as well [at this school]. (Focus Group, April 27, 2017)

Her words reinforced not only the importance of the focus group but also the meaning she took from dialoguing each day. She recognized the value that came from people

speaking and from people listening, and how the dialogue allowed everyone to contribute.

Throughout our interview, Mr. Carter stressed the need for society to talk more. He spoke to how he lived in a condo and that he rarely spoke to other people who lived in the condo. Rather, those he walks by are more likely to look away or to look at their phone than to start a conversation. He asked:

When are people going to talk? We are getting smarter and smarter in terms of engineering and scientific creation, but in terms of humanity and relations, are we getting better? I don't know. Are we talking more, are we talking less? Are we caring more? (Interview, March 30, 2016)

He stressed that he loved restorative practices and circles because they established structures for talking. When people talked openly, he observed people who were engaged, trusted, and supported. In speaking to the importance of building capacity in staff and students, Ms. Amherst upheld circles and community building as the basis for that. She recognized that it was difficult to say exactly how much one can attribute change to restorative practices, for it ties many ideas together. Nonetheless, she viewed the circles and community building as the core of everything that she did, declaring that it was the core because “that is the way I think” (Interview, April 26, 2016).

Summary

Yin (2014) suggests that using existing theoretical propositions can be valuable for analyzing data. Employing literature related to *leading restorative culture change*, and using coding and axial coding to work from the ground up, I created subcategories

and then categories (Klenke, 2008), ultimately divulging 12 themes. These themes are employed in Chapter Five to address the research questions. The themes are:

1. What is Restorative? Perspectives on a Restorative Philosophy
2. Leading for a Restorative Culture: Implementing and Leading a Restorative Vision
3. Training: Leadership Investing in a Restorative Foundation
4. Questions, Dialogue, and Circles: The Heart of Restorative Practices
5. Restorative Responses to Conflict
6. Leading Restoring Practices out of an Ethic of Care
7. Resisting Change and Resisting the Resisters
8. Humanizing a School Culture
9. Learning and Restorative Practices
10. A Culture Revealed
11. Celebrating the Story
12. Research as Professional Development

The themes reveal the importance of interactions when speaking of restorative culture, for it is in these interactions that an organization and its culture are formed. Relational space, training, dialogue, responding to conflict, care, learning, celebrating, and research as a space for growth all arise out of interactions. Bradbury and Lichtenstein (2000) name that case studies allow researchers to engage with context and how context impacts research, specifically when the research is interpersonal and is conducted through personal interaction. The case study reveals the complexities of interactions within a school, for each interaction is influenced by the individuals in the interaction. The space

that is created when two or more people come together is influenced by contextual factors: philosophy, attitudes, perspective, history, and a myriad of other factors. The next chapter will further examine how this study contributed to understanding the leading of restorative practices in a school, how the community responded to the leading of change, and how the practices impacted the school community.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of restorative practices in a school setting. Specifically, the study examined how school leadership engaged in leading a school community through the change process of developing a restorative culture. Furthermore, the research sought to study how members of the school community engaged with restorative practices on a day-to-day basis. The study was founded in three questions: What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture? How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community? What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community?

I undertook this study as an advocate of restorative practices. Nonetheless, my experiences with schools employing restorative practices were limited, mainly restricted to my own teaching experiences. I wanted to undertake research to learn from the experiences of others in regard to the leading of restorative practices in a school setting. Particularly of interest to me was to remain an arm's length from the school being researched in order that I could examine the school as an outsider looking in on how this specific school had undertaken their journey.

Jabri (2015) likens the organizational change process to a river, stating that every river has its own context based on "banks, topography, and terrain" (p. 3). Just as a river is in a constant state of flux, so to the organization—in this case a school—is constantly moving. It is very easy to look at the river as it appears today. Yet, a river is changed by both minor and major events. A torrential downpour, an ice jam, or the work of a beaver changes the flow of the river. Even the flow of the river itself changes the river as the

banks erode and sediment builds up: The river is ever changing. The story of this school reflects one looking at a river. It is easy for members of the school community to view the river as it stands today, to view the “banks, topography, and terrain” of the current school culture. Yet, as I studied the school, I was struck that culture is not only a picture of where the members of the community are but where the members of the community are going. The history of a river can provide a foundation for understanding where the river might go. Likewise, understanding the history of the restorative culture initiative and the major and minor events along the way that shaped the school can provide a foundation for understanding where the school is going, both in terms of restorative culture and the culture as a whole. The interviews, observations, focus groups, field notes, and journaling provided the opportunity to analyze the river: its past, its present, and its future. The chapter is organized by the research questions, starting with leadership and leading from a vision. The second section examines how culture change was experienced. The third section addresses what the current restorative culture looks like. The 12 themes from the findings are employed throughout the discussion, fulfilling what Stake (1995) deems as the need for the researcher to put theory up against the research critical to the phenomenon being studied—the leading of restorative culture change—and the research questions. The research questions shape a story: a story of starting with a vision, implementing a vision, fulfilling a vision, and assessing a vision. While not a perfect timeline, Chapter Five, in working out of the research questions, takes on a chronological nature as the case—or the story—of one school’s journey unfolds through the participants and the researcher.

Leading Out of a Vision: Developing a New Culture

Examining the role of leadership in developing the school culture, three central themes are expounded upon: the need for a vision, the intentionality of relationality, and a model of building a relational restorative culture.

Leading for a Restorative Vision

The research revealed that the concept for employing restorative practices started with a vision of the principal (Theme #1). She desired a school that upheld safety, upheld accountability, and that used restorative practices as the means by which the school would do business. This foundation upholds literature that states that implementing restorative change in organizations starts with a leader or a leadership team that is committed to long-term change (Blood, 2005; Costello et al., 2009; Morrison et al., 2005). Kotter (2009) describes that change requires a vision, for the vision describes not only the change itself but also the process for fulfilling it. While Schein (2004) acknowledges that culture itself will be shaped by interactions of people within the community, the primary influence for change comes about through leaders who enact their values and beliefs upon those that they lead. Likewise, Elmore (2004) posits that change is impossible without a vision on which to base the change. This principal stepped in and saw a culture that was not conducive to learning and was not upholding the best interests of staff or students. She wanted a place where middle school students could thrive through a vision for community and accountability, and so she undertook the change process, desiring to implement a relational restorative culture within the school. Goldring (as cited in Roby, 2011) notes that organizational relationships possess much greater power for impacting the culture of an organization than formal titles do. The

undertaking of implementing a relational restorative culture by leadership is in itself a vision for change that is executed not because of the formal role of the leader but by the leadership engaging relationally to support members of the organization in engaging relationally. Uhl-Bien (2006), in speaking to relational leadership theory, upholds that relational processes become relational leadership when the leadership influences a new social context combined with new values and goals. This production can be either positive or negative, as new social contexts are a production of interaction: leading vision and leading resistance to a vision, all are constructions that take place within interactions. Spillane (2005) upholds distributed leadership as leadership that is fulfilled in interaction. I considered how constant tension between having everybody on board versus leading people who resisted was something that leadership continually needed to navigate. I imagined that this could become a burden on leadership; yet the development of restorative culture—or any culture—requires continual investment, first by leadership and then by others in the organization (Journal, May 25, 2016). It is in distributing vision and leadership across the school that the restorative vision for culture change could start to take hold.

Executing a Vision

Leaders must shape the culture of the organization, or else the members of the organization will shape the culture. A vision that is executed results in organizational change. In speaking to transformative leadership, Burns (1978) emphasizes leaders must have a vision for followers and fulfilling the needs of those followers. In the case of this school, the principal had a vision for establishing a relational learning environment where each student could flourish. Bass and Riggio (2006) stress that transformational leaders

must intrinsically motivate followers. While not every staff member was on board with restorative practices, the research revealed that many staff members were driven by the possibility of restorative practices improving the learning environment for both students and staff.

Fullan (2001a) describes the process of leadership implementing organizational change as a balance between pushing the vision while finding the comfort zone of the followers in the organization. During the research, I also pondered the balance that needed to occur when taking people out of their comfort zone, for pushing people can lead them into the vision but can also lead them away from the vision if they resist too much (Journal, April 27, 2016). In the language of restorative practices and the social discipline window (Wachtel & McCold, 2004), this balance could be described as implementing a vision *with* members of the organization rather than doing change *to* members of the organization. As I discovered in previous research (Webb, 2009), the need to be in control and to have power can limit the ability of staff and students to engage in change, specifically restorative processes. This inhibits the ability of leadership, teachers, support staff, and students to mutually work with each other. The loss of mutuality results in staff and students seeking to find power wherever they can, inhibiting the change process and thereby the learning process (Journal, May 29, 2016).

The process for implementing the vision needs to be synonymous with the restorative vision itself, for culture needs to be embedded in consistency. The need for persistence was evident throughout the research. Teachers and support staff upheld that persistence brought the culture to where it currently was. One cannot redirect a river in a day. Change requires a constant investment in redirecting the river, always seeking to

lead the flow of the culture in the direction the leadership—both formal and informal—desires. If leadership ceases to direct the river, the flow of the river changes direction. Continual investment leads to continual change, and change in people leads to change in culture (Journal, June 3, 2016).

Resistance to vision. As the vision for implementing a restorative culture initially took hold, and as it was evident that the change was not just a trend that was going to go away, then resistance also took hold. The irony of a vision from leadership is that a vision provides something for followers to resist. Nonetheless, culture always exists. If leadership is not shaping the culture, then other people in the organization shape the culture. The research revealed resistance by staff within the school; some resisted for a short period while others never came on board with the restorative vision over the 4-year implementation period (Theme #7). Simply put, Fullan (2007) names that people resist change. In Theme #7, a support staff member described the tension he witnessed between the principal and the leadership team he was a part of seeking to establish a restorative culture in the school and a group of staff who were resisting the change:

I think that was challenging [resistance] because it can wear you [leaders] down, especially when you are trying to do something good... you end up trying to make people's lives fulfilling... you are not trying to be negative. You're trying to help people, and they are being negative and resistant. And that sometimes is disheartening, I think, for people who were trying to make that change.

(Interview, April 14, 2016)

Laloux and Wilbur (2014) explain that change brings about two general responses: growing into the change, or ignoring the issues that brought about change and

maintaining the status quo. Near the end of the research, I questioned how unified a school culture could be when schools are staffed by individuals with diverse personalities and values (Journal, June 8, 2016). The resistance of a portion of the staff was consistent with how McCluskey (2014a) named that restorative culture change is a “disruptive and unsettling” (p. 136) experience. Morrison et al. (2005) described how challenging both personal and organizational values, processes, and assumptions is difficult for members of the organization. Fullan (2001b) describes this resistance as an *implementation dip* (p. 40), as members of the organization fear the change, in part because they feel they lack the skills and knowledge to successfully implement the change. In the case of this school, staff questioned the viability of restorative practices, questioning the time and the energy required to fulfil the culture. Furthermore, staff distrusted the processes and questioned whether the processes were resulting in desired outcomes. Common refrains when questioning restorative processes included: Are they playing us? Is dialogue enough? Fullan describes that for these processes to be successful, the leader must stay focused on the moral purpose that the culture change brings about, but also needs to employ processes that increase momentum rather than stall it.

Managing perceptions of the vision. While persistence was a trait that members of staff equated with the principal’s ability to instill the vision, persistence alone was not enough to change the culture. The principal spoke about light bulb moments in the all-staff training session and how the trainer helped the staff see value in constructive restorative processes for resolving conflict rather than resorting to punishment (Theme #3). Staff members spoke to how they appreciated the training coming from a former educator. In each of these cases, it struck me that managing change was the process of

managing perception. A leader helps to navigate those she or he is leading by helping them to see things in new ways. This can include perceptions of the change initiative. If followers do not buy into the vision, then the change initiative is all for naught. On a grander scale, if members of the organization do not buy into the leader, then the ability to lead the organization is near impossible. In Theme #2 of the findings, a teacher spoke to navigating how staff may view leadership:

If you try to force this on them... they are gonna say...pffft. Even if they want to do it, they wouldn't do it, because they don't want to prove that to the principal or whatever. That's the vibe I get. Even if they thought, "this is the best thing ever," they won't do it still. (Interview, June 7, 2016)

Another staff member recalled his battle with his perception of the principal and how he had to change his perception of her, not because of anything she had done, but because he made up a story about her before he got to know her. The leader may have the best interests of followers and of the organization, but the leader also needs to consider the perception of those she is leading: she must be calculated and purposeful in creating a perception that is attractive to followers. Jabri (2015) upholds that members define their roles, not leadership:

What is important is not only how the change leader sees the change recipients, but how they see the leader and themselves, and how they relate to each other. The emphasis is on how the rules and norms appear to organizational members and how they see or define their roles, rather than how the organization defines or sees its members. (p. 7)

For leadership to take people where they will not go on their own, they must create a

change endeavor that, by the perceptions of followers, is worth pursuing. The training serves to create a common vision for the restorative philosophy such that the school community is working out of a common understanding of what it means to use restorative practices (Theme #1). I reflected that the second restorative training session which stalled momentum for restorative practices highlighted the value of a quality restorative practices trainer who could connect with the staff and who possessed experience, expertise, and effective presentation skills. I also considered how this session also emphasized the weight that administration can put on a single training session and how these sessions potentially can build or break the momentum that leadership is seeking to create (Journal, April 27, 2016).

Schein (2004) states that leadership and culture are closely tied, and therefore a leader creates culture through a vision, but then also has to manage culture. Jabri (2015) posits that this means creating a self-perception that desires to relate to others. The next section examines the need to be intentional in creating a positive relational culture whereby members of the organization desire to work with each other in the pursuit of culture change.

The Intentionality of Relationality

The concept of relationships is integral to participants' construct of restorative practices, further supporting the work of Morrison et al. (2005), such that organizations need to acknowledge the value of relationships and work towards nurturing relations throughout the institution. Likewise, the research supports the work of Blood and Thorsborne (2005), whereby relationships are viewed as critical not only for upholding a restorative culture but also for building it. Spillane (2005) speaks to the need for

distributed leadership to be intentional in creating and leading interactions, for the created culture is much more than simply the sum of the individuals. I noted that if culture was created through the interaction of people, then leadership and staff need to put tremendous value on establishing physical and organizational structures for placing people in positions to build positive school community (Journal, April 27, 2016). Nevertheless, this also reveals the catch-22 of building a restorative culture, for a philosophy that seeks to build relationships also requires a positive relational culture in the first place. As stated by a teacher in Theme #10, “If you’ve got a positive, constructive culture... it is probably a lot easier to get in there” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Likewise, from a support staff member in Theme #8: “I think it would be very difficult to implement restorative practices [without positive relationships], because it is a change in mindset in how you are going to deal things when they go wrong” (Interview, April 14, 2016). The principal spoke to her strategies for establishing a restorative foundation.

Microrelating. In Chapter Four, I referred to the concept of being intentional about making decisions for people and for learning that seeks to enhance opportunities for relationship building (Theme #8). I have named this process *microrelating*. The principal was intentional about microrelating. In one instance, the principal spoke to a change in the daily timetable that allowed students to work with fewer teachers, thereby increasing time for building relationships. She spoke to the use of circles for classroom community building, conflict resolution, and for staff meetings.

Rhodes et al. (2011) believe that structures including orientation programs, timetables, and learning spaces can provide intentionality in linking students and teachers

and thereby contribute to a positive culture. These structures for dialogue ensure community members are speaking *with* each other rather than *to* each other, again supporting the social discipline window proposed by Wachtel (1999). Microrelating is a process that needs to be employed in all decision-making to consider how every pedagogy, every decision, and every interaction in the community can be made to be relational. Komives et al. (2013) support that leadership involves relationships and therefore, to lead, leadership must invest in relating with others. Likewise, Uhl-Bien (2006) in speaking to relational leadership theory theorizes that leadership requires processes involving social construction in order to bring forth meaning, for meaning is found in relation. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) stress that those who desire to lead out of a relational philosophy need to view leadership not as manipulating people but rather as relating with followers. Leaders must also strategize by creating physical spaces for members of the organization to relate. Relational leadership theory pushes research in leadership to evaluate leadership based on relational *processes* rather than purely on the effectiveness of leadership (Hosking, 2000; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

I was deeply moved by the story of the staff member who was facing a critical illness and how administration chose to share this with the staff together rather than through an e-mail, and ultimately how this impacted staff by providing a space to be together to navigate this unfortunate news. This was a powerful example of how a small decision was intentionally made relational.

A support staff member spoke to how questions in class needed to uplift students and provide options for dialogue rather than put them in a place where they are cornered by a question which they cannot answer. Again, this created a space where students felt

that they spoke with teachers rather than being spoken to by teachers. Reflecting on the responses of participants, I considered how questions used in circles, questions used for responding to conflict, and questions used for pedagogical purposes need to be carefully crafted to lead students into dialogue (Journal, June 1, 2016). Reitz (2015) names this as creating spaces that stimulate dialogue rather than terminating it. It is these small processes of microrelating that begin to create a positive relational culture, for students desire to engage. Speaking to circles, in Theme #9 a teacher expressed, “I think is a really neat way to teach, because it really does force them all to be involved in thinking and adding to it” (Interview, May 31, 2016).

Structures for dialogue. The research revealed a key component of restorative practices for me when a support staff member articulated that the strength of restorative processes was the structure it provided for bringing people into dialogue (Theme #4). I considered how the physical placement of people, the questions used for initiating dialogue, and the ground rules established for entering dialogue are essential for establishing effective dialogue amongst members of the school community (Journal, June 8, 2016). For both staff and students, restorative practices provided a space and a dialogic structure for ensuring dialogue was intentional and safe. The space bridges the voices of those involved in the dialogue, providing a foundation for relationship building. Buber (as cited in Ashman & Lawler, 2008) posits that meaning is not found in things, but between things. Crotty (as cited in Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012) names that meaning is relational. The social constructionist perspective posits that persons and social groups develop both personal and collective understanding in interactions and relationships (Drewery, 2016): Organizations are not just a medium for relations; organizations are

produced through interactions between people (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). Creating space allowed individuals to find meaning between them. Barrett (2013) stresses that dialogue is crucial for building relationships, and therefore dialogue is crucial for a culture of restoration. While it is common in both literature and practice in education to speak of the importance of relationship building amongst members of the school community, it struck me through the research process that we cannot think our way into relation. There is energy required, especially at the outset, to lead both students and staff toward routines and structures for engaging in dialogue that becomes the foundation for relation. I observed a staff member teaching a student how to greet me during the research process. This act demonstrated to me the need to teach students how to greet someone, for I contemplated how adults can bemoan students who are not hospitable to adults, and yet it could be that students have never been taught to be welcoming (Journal, March 31, 2016). Restorative practices come to life through the use of dialogue, restorative questions, proactive and reactive circles, and restorative conferences, providing a structure and a space for voice; two or more voices become a dialogue. An administrator commented in Theme #4, “It [restorative practices] formalized the process a little more, and I think it just puts structure to the process as opposed to just randomly talking” (Interview, April 6, 2016).

The leader and the followers. In speaking to relational leadership theory, Uhl-Bien (2006) states that relational leadership is a process of social influence whereby, through a social order that evolves over time, change is experienced through newly constructed behaviours and values. As a math teacher, I speak to my students about *corresponding angles*. In basic terms, corresponding angles are angles that are of equal

size but found in different places: the same thing found in a different place. Throughout the research process, I have observed the need for *corresponding structures of dialogue* or dialogic structures that look similar in different parts of the organization. The structures that leadership require students, support staff, and teachers to use need to be modelled and reflected at the leadership level also. These corresponding structures of restorative dialogue include providing a voice, listening, honouring the value of those you dialogue with, using circles and restorative questions, and simply providing space for dialogue.

The principal stressed that trust was the key to all change in the school, endorsing Rhodes et al. (2011), who state that positive culture starts with relational trust (Theme #10). Solomon and Flores (as cited in Caldwell & Dixon, 2010) uphold trust as a critical leadership factor in interpersonal relationships, for trust ultimately empowers followers. Yet again, creating the culture requires a foundation: a double bind of requiring positive relationships to establish a strong relational culture. Fullan (2007) stresses the need for leaders to examine how they treat their followers. Likewise, Northouse (2013) emphasized that in the context of servant leadership, followers must be the main concern of the leader. As a teacher implied, if new initiatives are brought in but the followers do not believe in the leader, then the new initiative is simply not going to happen. There were both teachers and support staff who shared their struggles either with believing in the leader or with believing in the restorative philosophy, contributing to the implementation dip at the school. Likewise, students sought consistency from staff that upheld students as worthy, thereby allowing them to trust staff in future interactions (Journal, June 1, 2016). The principal fought through the dip of staff struggling with the

change process, providing training, investing in resources, and hiring people who philosophically agreed with restorative practice in the hope that staff implemented the practices. Bass and Riggio (2006) uphold that for transformation to occur, the transformational leader is always seeking to increase the intrinsic motivation of those she or he follows, putting the work into the hands of followers. In speaking about her staff, the principal stated: “Treat everybody as if they are your best people” (Interview, April 26), in order that they may flourish. Fullan (2007) highlighted the delicate balancing act of this, stating that leaders need to lead while avoiding managing and controlling followers.

The inability of restorative practices to take hold across the organization can be viewed from a perspective of power. While some staff members struggled to uphold the power of the principal, others struggled to give power to students. In Theme #10, a member of the administrative team suggested: “Some teachers are still reluctant to do that [work in the restorative mindset], because they are still in the, *I’m the teacher, you are the student* model which I think... 21st century, we’ve got to get past that” (Interview, April 6, 2016). McCluskey et al. (2011) state that educators are reluctant to give up power, content to employ punishment as a means of doing discipline *to* students, deeming this approach to be acceptable for responding to conflict. Reflecting on power, I considered during the research that staff members who employed regular opportunities to dialogue with students in class appeared to be effective for leading students toward better understanding their peers and having students reflect on their own views and perspectives (Journal, June 8, 2016). The inability of staff to work *with* students at the classroom level negated the strength of restorative practices at the classroom level. Crouch (2013)

advocates for a *with* system of power, whereby followers must not see the new structure as giving up power but rather as creating power as students are empowered by the relational and dialogic foundations of restorative practices. Umbreit et al. (2007) view the dialogic process as a restorative process of empowerment. Yet Crouch recognizes creating power is a complex task, as new structures bring new values. Values that came with restorative practices were not something that all staff members were immediately willing to embrace. On the other hand, many staff members embraced the sharing of power, grasped onto the relational restorative philosophy, and experienced powerful changes in terms of relationships, community, and learning. Northouse (2013), in speaking to servant leadership, suggests that when leadership is willing to share power, then followers share the opportunity to be a part of meaningful change in their organization.

A Model of Building Restorative Culture

The proposed model seeks to address how a leader addresses the paradoxes of needing a strong relational culture upon which to build a strong restorative culture. Schein (2004) conjectures that culture is created through the collective experiences of those in a school. Likewise, G. Morgan (1986) deems that the creation of culture happens through social interactions. In this vein, formal leadership must view this as a model that is integral for every member of a school community to embrace, for each and every individual is responsible for creating the culture. Darling-Hammond (1988) speaks to how distributed leadership requires multiple leaders—at both formal and informal levels—to take on leadership through interactions and thereby influence school culture. Uhl-Bien and Ospina (2012), speaking to relational leadership theory, conjecture that

truth is a result of interpretation of meaning that comes to fruition in relational spaces; therefore, culture and meaning creation occurs when two or more people within an organization come together. They add that spaces, and thereby culture, are redefined in the building of relationships. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) state that examining culture from a relational ontology provides a foundation for understanding reality as intersubjective, revealed through dialoging with others.

The *restorative model of leading culture change* (see Figure 2) was inspired by the teacher, Mr. Gardiner, who stated that every experience one has in a school is either positive or negative. Reitz (2015) deems that each individual in a relationship is impacted by every interaction that occurs in that relationship. Here, I believe a reminder is useful, in that culture is constantly in flux. It is like the metaphor of the river, whereby the organization is always flowing. Leadership seeks to direct the flow toward the vision (Theme #2, Theme #3).

Leading encounters. Culture change in an organization begins in its most basic form when one individual interacts with another individual. Restorative leaders are tasked with intentionally creating moments of encounter, or microrelating. In these encounters, leaders seek to create physical space, providing for opportunities for dialogue in an environment where it is safe for those in the dialogue to converse and to take risks.

Encounters occur tens of thousands of times per day in a school and are the building blocks of culture. When this environment is less controlled, the potential for harm in encounters increases. The math person in me considers that in a school of 800 individuals (a theoretical number), there are *800 choose 2*, or over 319, 000 one-on-one relationships that could be nurtured. School leadership—formal and informal—needs to

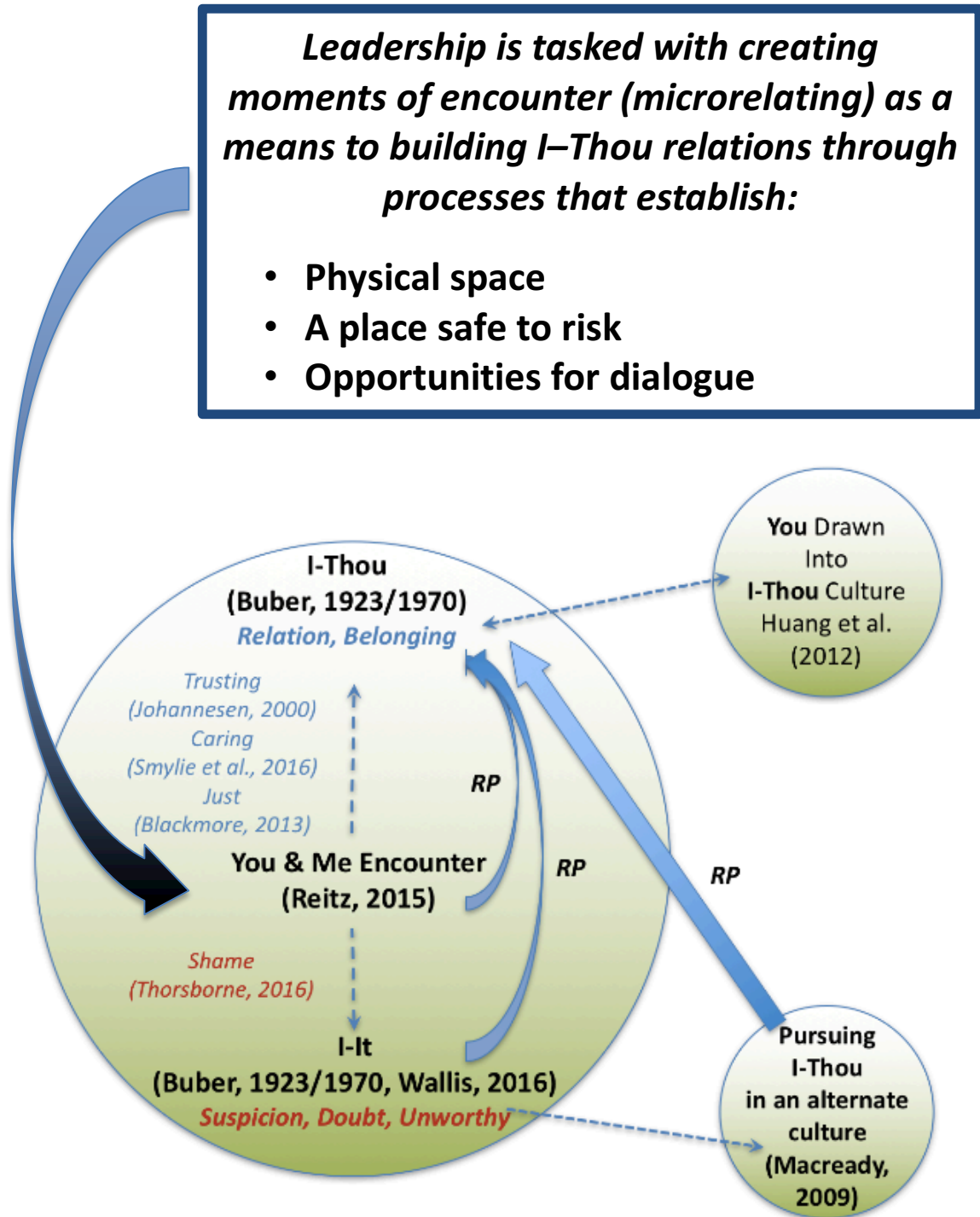


Figure 2. A restorative model of leading culture change.

develop structures and processes that allow each of these potential one-on-one relationships to be nurtured. Dialogue and other communicative processes are “the vehicle in which self and world are in ongoing construction” (Bouwen & Hosking, 2000, p. 268). Restorative questions, restorative circles, and restorative conferences can serve as a model for creating dialogic encounters to potentially strengthen relationships.

I-Thou and I-It Continuum. Morrison et al. (2005) speak to every interaction upholding what is important in a school and what is not. Vaandering (2016) acknowledges that people are both broken through relation and healed through relation and therefore even in times of conflict, school leadership must be intentional about bringing together members of the school community to dialogue (Theme #5). Reitz (2015) describes the coming together of people as encounters, with the hope that researchers could think in terms of the relational dynamic occurring when individuals come together but not assuming that people coming together is a relation. I will think of this encounter in terms of *You and Me*. Building on the idea that every encounter can be positive or negative, I consider that every interaction has the potential to uphold the result of the encounter as enforcing those in an I-Thou relation or an I-It relation (Theme #8). Students upheld positive relations with their teachers as caring and trusting, reinforcing Johannesen (2000), who speaks to I-Thou relations as honest, truthful, frank, loving, and demonstrating care (Theme #6). Upholding the social condition of followers is an integral piece of Carolyn Shields’s (2010) transformative leadership, always assessing how the social condition of followers can be improved. In upholding care, trust, and the social condition of followers, power imbalances are reduced. Blackmore (2013) notes that leadership needs to be inclusive in order for the school culture to be one of inclusivity.

On the other hand, encounters that reinforce I–It relations reveal shame. The principal spoke of students who did not want to engage in dialogic restorative processes due to the shame that might be experienced through dialoguing with others. A support staff member named that students could feel shamed when called on to answer a question that they could not answer. Thorsborne (2016) described shame as a

mechanism that lets us know when something that is good has been interrupted...

Words we use to describe that shame has been triggered and that we have become aware of it include: frustrated, confused, embarrassed, humiliated, uncomfortable, rejected, disrespected, diminished, remorseful, powerless, hurt, inadequate, foolish, isolated, helpless, worthless, wounded, awkward, shy, excluded, patronised, insulted. (pp. 31–32)

Shame does not mean that an individual intentionally desired to hurt another individual. A student who is challenged by a concept or assessment may experience frustration, confusion, and or embarrassment: a form of shame. Nonetheless, with repeated experiences of feeling shame, specifically without dialogic interventions, students will move further toward the I–It end of the continuum, separating themselves from the learning culture that one desires them to engage in. Teachers and support staff can feel this same shame, challenged by administration or challenged by new ideas and visions that they find confusing and uncomfortable. Without a dialogic intervention, they separate themselves from the desired culture (Theme #7). One could include the restorative vision as an idea that potentially brings about shame. Wallis (2016) boldly states: “Treating someone as an object that we can use or abuse for our own ends we must first dehumanise them” (p. 140).

Restorative dialogue as a means to I-Thou. The power of restorative practices is the use of dialogic structures that aim to use both pro-active and reactive processes to seek to move members of the school community toward I-Thou relations (Theme #4), as shown in the model. A key to dialogue is having the mind of the *other* (Buber, 1961; Czubaroff, 2000). I considered how one's voice allows one to reveal her/his views and ultimately her/his identity (Journal, March 31, 2016). Jabri (2015) adds that along with understanding the other, one must listen in such a way that allows the other in the dialogue to reveal his or her world. Greenleaf and Spears (2002) speak to servant leadership and how leaders can lead their followers by listening. They uphold that it is in listening that leaders develop empathy for followers. Time and time again, staff mentioned that restorative practices helped them to step into the shoes of students to empathize with their situation (Theme #6). Wallis (2016) adds that the most powerful empathy happens face to face. Ms. Lewis described that the most valuable way she recalled to be empathetic was when the trainer put student situations and student needs in the context of adults. "When you relate things with adults back to adults, and they see that a kid's perspective might be the same way...they are like, 'huh... oh my gosh...OK.'" We need to use corresponding structures for dialoguing, for both staff and students have *corresponding needs*: to be trusted, to be cared for, and to have a voice. Individuals are motivated by needing positive relationships (Morrison et al., 2005).

Separation from the culture. Macready (2009) deems that when individuals are punished by individuals they do not care for, it leads to a negative cycle where the individuals seek solace from others who share similar values and attitudes. Freire (2000) states: "Each time the 'thou' is changed into an object, an 'it,' dialogue is subverted and

education is changed to deformation” (p. 89). Through repeated shaming, individuals negate the ability to dialogue with those they have shamed. When dialogue is negated, the ability to restore relationships is not possible. Students expressed how they experienced this shame, being called out publicly in class or not having their voice heard. Likewise, the research revealed that staff resisted dialogue and engaging with the restorative vision when they did not feel trusted or if they did not trust the leadership (Theme #6). Rather than engage with the vision, they shut down.

An individual who experiences shame repeatedly seeks to leave the current culture and find an alternate culture where he or she can experience being an I–Thou, as demonstrated in the model. All individuals desire a place where they have positive relationships, where they belong, and where they have a voice. If the current culture does not offer that, it is sought elsewhere. These cultures do not have to occur in another building or even in another room. Some staff at the school created a culture of antirestoration, seeking to upheave the vision to build a restorative culture. A classroom teacher finds it difficult to conduct a circle, for a group of students derail the circle process (sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally) and thereby seeks to resist the desired restorative culture and employ other pedagogies that allow for control of the classroom. Huang et al. (2012) describe that groups are loyal to their members as they find commonality around their values and their norms. Schein (2004) states that strong cultures grow out of shared experiences and, as they work together to survive and integrate, they become stronger as a culture. When a culture works in opposition to the culture being created, the hope is that restorative processes can work to bring people back into the relational restorative culture. Yet, the more engrained people are in their own

culture, the more difficult it is to lead them toward another culture, especially when they have felt alienated by that culture in the past.

Bridging: Drawing people into a culture. On the contrary, a restorative culture highlighted by individuals who experience I–Thou when in space with others, creates a culture whereby they draw others in, demonstrated in the model by people who seek to be a part of the greater culture. The example of the support staff member who opened his door for students, the students who came back to the school after graduating to participate in circles, or the students who asked for circles all sought to draw others into a larger community (Theme #10). Cloete (2014) viewed the strength of a social network in its ability to bridge to other groups. Teachers described working with colleagues who wanted no part of the restorative philosophy but, when they tried the circles, experienced the dialogue, and gained trust from their students, they were sold on the restorative practices. They were led to see the value of relations and belonging and the impact it had on their learning culture (Theme #9), thereby becoming a part of the restorative culture itself. I contemplated how the principal described restorative practices as *the way the school does business* and considered how this is a great way to describe the culture: the patterns that are inherent to the daily operations of the school (Journal, April 27, 2016).

The model and the conceptual framework. The model stresses how constructionist relational processes (Uhl-Bien, 2006) are effective for creating spaces that enable learning to take place. It highlights the need for restorative leadership to be intentional in creating spaces for members of the school community to encounter (Reitz, 2015), then dialogue (Buber, 1923/1970), in order to establish an environment for

positive relating such that interactions have a greater potential to travel towards I–Thou on the continuum than toward I–It.

Particularly relevant to caring are those structural elements of school organization that create opportunities for students, teachers, and principals to interact; to learn about each other; to develop long-term, deep, and trusting relationships; and to engage in caring action and interaction. (Smylie et al, 2016, p. 13)

Encounters can be established by both formal and informal leaders (Spillane, 2005) employed for decision-making, responses to conflict, and for leading learning. One-on-one microencounters establish the macroculture of the school (Fletcher, 2012). The more that these encounters can happen effectively, the greater the likelihood of continuing to shift the culture toward being relational, caring (Smylie et al., 2016), just, inclusive, and representational (Blackmore, 2013). The model stresses that leadership can never cease to shape culture in this way, for if leadership fails to turn the river in the direction it desires, then the power of the river will dictate the culture that is built. In the *restorative model of leading culture change*, leadership seeks to build a relational restorative culture whereby encounters that seek to dialogue in order to build relationships in the context of I–Thou is *what the people do*. When conflict occurs, safe and caring dialogue continues to be integral in leading people toward being upheld as “thou” in order to draw people into the desired culture.

Assessing the Effectiveness and Value of Restorative Practices.

While there were many anecdotal stories of the value of restorative practices, there was no formal process or assessment tool for evaluating the effectiveness of restorative practices. Both administrators and a teacher suggested that the effectiveness

needed to be measured. While the school had seen weakening of the use of restorative practices since the initial surge of training, it also appeared that the school had forgotten where they were and to what degree they were still using restorative practices. The river had continued flowing, but the failure to remember what the river used to look like prevented the school from considering how far the river had come.

Are restorative practices working? Support staff member Ms. Ennie wondered what effective restorative practices would look like and asked what “working” looked like at other schools. The question revealed that this staff member was unsure whether restorative practices were having the desired effect, for there was a limited picture of how to assess the effectiveness of the restorative culture (Theme #10). When some staff members articulated they wanted more restorative practices at the school, I viewed the gap between staff wanting more but staff also being unsure of what more restoration looked like as an interesting dilemma. It left me asking, “How do schools measure when a restorative culture has been established?” (Journal, June 1, 2016). Thomson (2010) reasons that leadership must name who change is for and how they will benefit. They also need to be able to assess whether or not the change effort has been successful. While this has to happen at an organizational level, this starts by assessing what is happening at the local or classroom level. White (2016) describes restorative practices as an emotionally draining practice, naming that in the midst of the daily grind of teaching, teachers need a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the practices they use. In this instance, teachers need to be able to discern if restorative practices are meeting the needs of their students. Van Oord (2013) expresses that transformation occurs only when one evaluates current practice. The transformative leader needs to be able to speak to where a school has been,

where they are, and where they are going. Mr. Gardiner conceived that the lack of baselines and data for evaluating goals had inhibited the ability of the administration and staff to determine how best to move forward with restorative practices. It is difficult to lead when you do not know where you are going. Sahin (2011) deems that only with assessment and feedback can a culture be embedded. Likewise, Schein (2004) suggests that leadership needs to examine culture, measure it, and take control of factors that they can.

Assessment and Culture. In measuring culture, Sahin (2011) deems that providing feedback after assessment is critical for culture to be embedded. This needs to happen amongst all levels of the school organization in order that there is opportunity to respond to needs and thereby make changes in order to embed the desired culture. Kotter (2009) articulates the importance of the vision in establishing successful culture changes. The vision needs to be clear, for leaders cannot take followers toward the vision if it is unclear where one is going. Members of the school articulated their vision for restorative practices (Theme #1, Theme #2). While the visions were all positive, the vision was not unified. Staff members expressed an extensive vision that included accountability, safety, openness, honesty in communication, collaboration, consistency, classroom focus, respect, and positivity. The lack of clarity in the vision made evaluating a difficult process. One way that Morrison et al. (2005) see vision executed is through policy. In the case of the school, there was no formal policy outlining the vision or processes employed by the school in terms of restorative practices.

The principal, Ms. Amherst, viewed that data would show reduced recidivism, fewer repeat visits to the office, lower absenteeism, and higher marks. The vice-principal,

Mr. Baccus, added he felt that more students were in class, suspensions were down, and learning was better. Much of the feedback they received was a result of people from outside the organization comparing the culture in the school to other cultures outside the school (Theme #10). While the feedback was positive, there was no standard from which to measure, and the standards fluctuated as the school was compared with different organizations. The question is, “What do we need to actually measure?” Rideout, Roland, Salinitri, and Frey (2010) acknowledged the need to move beyond simply perceiving discipline as punishment, recognizing the relational foundation of a restorative philosophy. Nonetheless, they assessed restorative practices through office visits, grades, behavioural infractions, and absences, factors that come out of a punitive paradigm. Reimer (2015) calls for relationship audits, whereby assessment examines the character of the relationships in a school. Uhl-Bien (2006) stresses the need to measure the relationality in a school—or one might say the microrelating in a school—when speaking to relational leadership theory: How does the design of school enable relating? How is leadership relational? How are decisions made around the foundation of relationships? Likewise, Llewellyn et al. (2013) stress the need to evaluate in terms of relationality, measuring collaboration, skill improvement, social relations, and the strength of community. Only with a unified vision can assessment of restorative practices and restorative culture be effective. Without the vision, evaluation goes only as far as the river flows today. Without knowing where the river has been, and where it is, one cannot start to examine where the river might be going.

How Was Culture Change Experienced?

Culture change is a measure of how those in the organization have experienced the change in the flow of the river amongst staff and students. This section examines the experience of consequences, the nature of dialogue, modelling, diluted culture, and celebration and how these themes divulge the changes in the culture of the school.

A Consequences Continuum

The research revealed the dichotomy staff members experienced around the word consequences (Theme #5). Habermas (1985) suggests that language can serve to organize goal-directed activities and can serve as a platform for socializing individuals.

Nonetheless, he also suggests (Habermas as cited in Barrett, 2013) that people will hear what they want to hear. Amongst the staff of the school, consequences generally served one of two purposes: consequences as accountability or consequences as sending a message. Reimer (2015) states that all schools are contextually relational spheres. She posits that the key question is whether the relationships are about *social engagement* or *social control*. Underlying their understanding of consequences is one's understanding of how to bring about change in individuals. Fullan (2001b) describes that how one views change determines one's need (or lack of need) to create new culture. Some involved in the research linked change arising out of compliance with lines drawn in policy. These staff members wanted the consequences alone to bring about immediate student change (Journal, May 31, 2016). Others viewed change as occurring through investment in relationships, whereby individuals would be compelled to change through understanding the impact of their actions on others and taking accountability for their actions. At times in the research, participants toggled between these two views of consequences, for

context could influence their perspective. Vaandering (2014b) stresses the need to be explicit in one's philosophy of being restorative, whereby restorative practices are evident in classes, in offices, and in hallways. The struggle between engagement and control was evident throughout the interview process.

Holding students accountable. It is not an understatement to say I was deeply moved by the support staff member who exclaimed that it was through punishing that one actually allows a student or staff member to get away with things. He stressed that it is through punishment that one denies an individual the opportunity for responsibility and accountability; he posited that appropriate consequences serve to help one take responsibility and accountability for his/her actions (Theme #5, Theme #8). Following this statement, I contemplated how a process that leaves control in the hands of the staff member and negates student voice may ultimately come at the cost of empowering the student (Journal, May 25). The value of restorative practice came in establishing a relationship with students and dialoguing to bring about change. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) state: "Rather than focusing on external sanctioning systems (rewards and punishment) as a motivational lever, RJ focuses on the motivational lever of relational ecologies, embedded in the value base of internal sanctioning systems" (p. 140). This was in stark contrast to other individuals who claimed that the restorative process—just talking—allowed students to get away with things and that more than dialogue was needed to bring about change. They sought accountability based on punishments, viewing that the punishment deterred future misconduct, believing if students knew the rule and understood the punishment, they would not make poor choices; it was believed that punishments further served to work as a deterrent.

Accountability in this instance was a result of understanding what would happen to them if they made a poor choice rather than being accountable because they understood how their actions would impact others. Llewellyn (2012) and Reimer (2011) viewed this as seeing conflict from the perspective of violating laws or violating people, returning to the dichotomy of social control versus social engagement. The need to flesh out language was clear, for the connotative disparities can prevent a uniform restorative vision and philosophy from being implemented.

Drawing lines in the sand. The research demonstrated a need by some educators to draw a line in the sand: If you cross this line, then this happens. These staff members were seeking to dictate the outcomes of the restorative process, but in dictating the outcome, it would appear they were also seeking to influence the process itself (Journal, June 1, 2016). Cremin (2014) suggests that a system void of sanctions can create insecurity in staff members. Nonetheless, when participants changed the context and spoke out of student needs, rather than speak in terms of punishment, the tendency was to speak to the need for conversations, patience, and a long-term approach to change, upholding that consequences did little for the long-term benefit of the student (Theme #6). Leading out of needs is an integral concept to both servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) and transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). At times, the participants seemed to battle a traditional systemic view in education of punishment with the restorative view they had learned. Blood (2005), Pavelka (2013), Reimer (2011), Shaw (2007), and Simpson (2004) all stress the complexity of shifting a school toward a relational and restorative culture in the face of what is a traditionally retributive system, upholding the need for strong leadership during this change. There was a need for

leadership to continue to provide opportunities to have staff grow into the philosophy through training and dialogue. Likewise, the value of perspective should not be underestimated here, for leading staff members and students to think out of needs rather than just desserts ultimately supports the best interests of those in conflict and those addressing conflict.

Restorative as proactive versus restorative as reactive. While some of the participants viewed restorative practice as both a reactive and a proactive philosophy, the research revealed that many staff members viewed restorative practices as a philosophy for responding to conflict, despite using many proactive strategies in their classrooms (Theme #1). The tendency by some to restrict restorative practices to a reactive process demonstrated that they did not see pro-active processes as essential. In some cases, they simply did not associate proactive measures with a restorative philosophy. Often these processes can occur outside of curriculum and some found it difficult to justify the processes when they needed to get down to the task of learning. Reactive responses to conflict were viewed as necessary for getting to the task of learning. Choosing to be proactive is seen by some as a step away from learning. Vaandering (2010) expressed that “while RJ addresses issues of conflict and behaviour it cannot be understood solely in these terms if it is going to play a role in transforming the culture of schooling” (pp. 145–146). Hopkins (2012) stated that proactive strategies can support culture change starting in the classroom.

In choosing to be proactive, the administrator or the teacher is choosing to engage with students: seeking their voice and eliciting their responses. The act of seeking the voices of others through dialogue can be a vulnerable experience, for seeking voice can

be viewed as a form of giving up control (Theme #10). Reitz (2015) cautions that when leading through open dialogue, leaders must be prepared to navigate unpredictable responses, for providing voice opens possible responses. The individual asking questions does not know what responses might come in return. Members of the community require the courage to seek voice, to ask questions, and to elicit responses. In the research, a support staff member described this as *interfering*, or engaging in dialogue to lead, to challenge, and to support others (Theme #4). Speaking to servant leadership, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) referred to this as being *liable*, or taking responsibility for the best interests of others, and the need to be intentional about eliciting the voice of others within the organization. Greenleaf and Spears describe respect and trust as optimal when members of communities are liable for each other. They add that without a liable community, trust and ethical behaviour are difficult for followers to learn.

The social discipline window (See Figure 1) speaks to this liability or working *with* each other (Wachtel & McCold, 2004). The research demonstrated moments of dialogue amongst administrators, teachers, support staff, and students whereby they felt trusted and empowered by the dialogues taking place. Freire (2000) states that to work with students, one must empower them: teachers and students must simultaneously become teachers and students. I argue this is true for all relationships in a school, as administrators empower staff and staff empower students. VanderVennen (2016) describes working out of the restorative or *with domain* as working out of secure attachment: “It is both a safe haven (high emotional support) and a launching pad for exploration (high expectations and high degrees of challenge), the domain most amenable to learning” (p. 130). Only when people feel safe, are they willing to take risks. A support

staff member recommending a student leadership program to an administrator, a teacher sharing about other teachers in a staff circle, or a student sharing his or her thoughts and concerns with a teacher are all examples of members of the school community taking risks and being vulnerable because they feel safe to take action in order to advocate for themselves and for others. The relational aspect of being proactive can establish the values and the dialogue that are required when it is necessary to respond to conflict. Again, corresponding structures are required in that the dialogic techniques employed when being proactive should look similar to those used when being reactive.

The research revealed both staff who did not see eye-to-eye and students who did not see eye-to-eye. In these instances, administration and staff sought to create an ethos of respect amongst the disagreeing groups such that they could work together and be in the vicinity of each other (Theme #10). Establishing a culture of with-ness in the classroom and during proactive uses of restorative practices transfers those same dialogic skills and views of the other to conflict resolution processes. Vaandering (2013) asserts that if adults in a school are used to being in power, then it is incredibly difficult to shift to being relational. Relational must be the culture rather than a viewpoint reserved for responding to conflict. Blackmore (2013) stresses that inclusive education starts with inclusive leadership, whereby democratic decision-making is foundational for the school community. McCluskey et al. (2011) express that if the tendency for staff to maintain power can feel reasonable, the teacher's strength can reside in a teacher's power. Crouch (2013) speaks to power that is multiplied, rather than the giving and losing of power. Viewing power as gain and loss is a power that negates the vulnerability required to engage with students and to establish vulnerability and risk such that trust is earned to

enhance the learning environment.

Consequences as a message intend to uphold equality amongst students. Consequences in terms of meeting needs speaks to equity, or the quality of being fair as it relates to the needs of members of the school community. The research revealed some individuals who described the need for equality, but more often than not the participants desired equity (Theme #5). In speaking to transformative leadership, Shields (2010) deemed that to uphold the full potential of students as learners, the learning environment must be one that is equitable for all. Van Oord (2013) holds that for a learning environment to be transformative, equality cannot come in consequences but rather in the relationships found across the school culture. The research revealed that equality in relation started with creating space for dialogue where everyone entered as an equal.

Dialogue

Throughout the course of the research, it became evident that dialogue and conversation were critical to the staff members' and students' understanding of and use of restorative practices (Theme #4). Staff members stressed the need for voice and the need for listening. Providing voice provides both students and staff a safe place to be heard. Increasing the information shared in a school increases the ability of members of the school community to respond to needs within the school. From the perspective of staff who employed restorative practices, the culture of conversation had changed. Circles were used for teaching values, for sharing stories, and for resolving conflict. Using the restorative questions standardized the dialogue process for staff members and ensured students received consistency in how members of the school responded to situations of conflict. Staff benefited from the community built through dialogic circles.

One day I sat down following a day of research and asked myself, “What am I really studying?” Is this entity that is referred to as restorative practices only about relationships? It was in reflection that I concluded that *restorative practices are a philosophy of dialogue*. Hosking (2007) states that working out of a relational orientation implies one must look at processes before persons, for leadership, people, and perspectives are built in processes. In a school setting, the process, or practice, of restorative practices seeks to guide how individuals view others, how they enter into space and dialogue with others, and how they respond to others such that they flourish as learners and as individuals, upholding the worth of those present. Reimer (2015) concludes that, for students, restorative is all about relationships and that, for staff, restorative is about relationships, though cluttered with other agendas. As uttered in a previous section, we cannot think our way into relation. Dialogue is the means to relationships, and for me relationships are the end that result from the process and practice of dialogue; the power of restorative practices is employing physical structures, questions, techniques, and perspective for entering members of the school community into dialogue in order to start the relationship building process. I viewed dialogue as an important part of restorative practices, but by no means did I view dialogue as the critical means for fulfilling restorative practices. Recognizing not only the power of dialogue but the essentiality of dialogue, for building relationships, resolving conflict, and building trust and care shattered my restorative paradigm. I for one easily speak to the importance of relationships as they pertain to restorative practices. Relationships are not possible without dialogue; a relational understanding of leading in schools requires an understanding of a theory of dialogue. Friedman (1960) states that it is through the

interaction of dialoguing, in the space outside of those dialoguing, that meaning is found. Hopkins (2012) sees the act of dialoguing as changing the *heart set* of those dialoguing, for the restorative process reveals heart-set beliefs. Dialoguing begins the process of individuals knowing others and being known by others, establishing a positive foundation for relationship building. Hosking (2007) holds that a relational view begins in processes and not in the people, and that ultimately to lead out of a relational orientation requires thinking in terms of the processes employed for bringing people into relation, those being processes that enable people to dialogue. The need to continue to train educators in how to establish dialogue is critical in order for our students to experience success in learning.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), speaking to relational leadership theory, uphold that relationships are “polyphonic and heteroglossic,” and as a result relational leading is initiated in relational dialogue. Restorative practices establish processes and structures for leading relationally. The research revealed that students, teachers, and parents were thankful for the opportunity to dialogue. Positive meaning and encouragement resulted from student circles, staff circles, and formal processes. And yet, dialogue was contentious. Staff members doubted the sufficiency of dialogue for resolving issues or for building community, viewing dialogue as weak or an easy way out. Some people resisted dialoguing, choosing to abstain from being involved in dialogues rather than speak with others (Theme #4). I considered how some staff were asked to lead circles, yet were unwilling to participate in them. Placing staff in a circle placed them on equal footing with their colleagues, which seemed to be a very vulnerable position for some staff members. Staff appeared to experience many of the feelings that students experience when sitting in circles (Journal, June 8, 2016). Reitz (2015) stresses that dialogue is

messy. Kazepedis (2010) conceives that because dialogue involves people, it will never be perfect. Cunliffe and Eriksen refer to this imperfection as moments of difference, advocating that diverse viewpoints can be used as a context for learning. Kazepedis stresses that even in flawed dialogue, there can be tremendous benefits to those in the dialogic space. Yet, over time there appeared to be a decrease in leading dialogue from both administrators and staff members. The lack of intentionality in building community amongst staff and/or students and in affirming the voices of both students and staff resulted in the dilution of the philosophy across the school.

Modelling

Modelling was an integral part of the restorative culture change process (Theme #8). The research showed that administrators, teachers, and students upheld the importance of modelling. Schein (2004) expresses the importance of modelling, as modelling—both positive and negative—permeates throughout an organization. The models within a school are a picture of what future interactions are supposed to look like. Modelling is a critical piece for contextualizing and defining future interactions, shaping language, processes, attitudes, and values; thereby molding the new culture. Elmore (2004) stresses that modelling is integral for creating new culture, for new behaviours must replace existing standards and values; mandates are not enough for cultures to transform. There was evidence of the trickle-down impact of modelling, as some teachers expressed that the support received from administration positively impacted what they did in the classroom. Students articulated how the positive attitude modelled by teachers and support staff encouraged them to be leaders in their school. The student attitudes

resulted in students making a positive impact on students outside the school. Modelling impacted culture within the school and in other school cultures

While modelling was critical, a support staff member also expressed that modelling came with a burden, for to model is to always uphold that model (Theme #5). Fullan (2006) describes that individuals in an organization must be unequivocal in applying a theory or philosophy in order for there to be true culture change. Yet, in being explicit in upholding a restorative vision and philosophy, an individual represents that vision and philosophy. A failure by the individual to uphold the restorative philosophy can be viewed by some—especially resisters—as a failure of the restorative philosophy itself. This can be further translated as a need to cease the use of restorative practices, for some claim the philosophy is “not working.”

While the research demonstrated those willing to model and those willing to be influenced by models, the research also revealed staff members who resisted in learning about and experiencing restorative processes (Theme #7). The example of staff members who publicly refused to partake in a staff circle not only defied the vision of the school leadership but they also denied themselves the opportunity to be influenced by the process. Furthermore, those individuals were not able to experience the emotion and tension of partaking in a circle. Teachers and students affirmed how circles supported voice, created community, and helped to overcome personal and relational barriers. The choices of defiant individuals denied them that privilege. In order to lead a circle, or any restorative process, it is critical that one has experienced it. Initially I considered modelling to be effective because leaders demonstrated to followers how to interact with others. Upon further reflection, I remarked that effective modelling allows followers to

understand what it *feels* like to experience effective modelling from leaders. I believe the desire to model to others is driven by personally experiencing positive modelling (Journal, May 28, 2016). Experiencing restorative practices provides critical insight as the teacher leads this for other students. Kotter (2009) cited the need for members of the school to see the vision working. A defiant staff member inhibits the working vision. The defiance reinforces a *power over* or *to* relationship, and this is the corresponding relationship that will be applied in the classroom. Croninger and Lee (2001) state that teachers are the model for classroom relationships and an ineffective student–teacher relationship prevents the staff member from leading effective student–student relationships. Student–student relationships represent the majority of one-on-one relationships within a school. While student–teacher relationships are important, in order to change culture, student–student relationships must be strengthened. The work of staff in leading these relationships is critical.

Diluted Restorative Change

Participants who had been at the school since the original vision had been implemented and who had navigated the implementation dip saw a surge in momentum after one of the all-staff training sessions (Theme #3). Yet, there appeared to be a reliance by many staff members on that training session as adequate for having learned the ins and outs of restorative practices; a common refrain of *I did the training* or *I have not done the training* was how staff often viewed themselves in terms of being restorative or not restorative. While research revealed that administration saw the people within the organization as the greatest resource in the school for restorative practices, there was a tendency by some staff to say they could not learn restorative practices without the

training. Reimer (2015) also experienced staff members who expressed concern over a lack of training and, though they recognized that they could invest in finding time and resources, other priorities took precedence and ultimately resulted in individuals yielding to restorative practices never being fully utilized in the school.

Early on, administration fought for time and money to provide training and trainers for the staff (Theme #3). There were sessions around strategizing how to further integrate restorative practices into the culture, even meeting with other schools to dialogue about restorative practices. Hauge et al. (2014) uphold the need for leadership to provide followers with time, flexibility, autonomy, and resources in order for an organization to fulfill its desired vision. And yet, if you do not continue to invest in changing the culture, then alternative cultures influence and change the organization. Administration had to battle lack of funding, priorities from the Ministry of Education, new staff, and the change that occurs with running an organization; the river never stops flowing (Theme #10). Fullan (2007) judges that leadership must work to help others in the organization make sense of projects that come down from higher levels of the school hierarchy, for these initiatives can steal energy from visions within the school. White (2016) names that there are always threats to implementing restorative practices, focusing on funding and staff. The investment and energy required to hire new staff and to train them for the overall school culture impacts the ability to work with existing staff, specifically around restorative practices. Culture is the sum of the interactions within an organization, and if the interactions are void of the philosophy and culture of restorative practices, then the culture shifts toward the dominant context and dialogues occurring in the space of encounters.

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) name that one of the most difficult tasks for leadership is to lead followers through resistance to change, for this conflict must be navigated for restorative practices to be integrated into the culture (Theme #7). Worse than resistance to restorative practices is not talking about it at all. An e-mail from a participant following an interview, whereby she reflected on her responses following the interview and then used her restorative knowledge because of her responses in the interview, was an integral moment for my understanding of creating restorative culture (Theme #12). The support staff member stressed that teachers must be active in doing restorative practices. If they are not doing it, they are not dialoguing about it, and therefore it is not remotely on their minds. Echoing this sentiment, when I asked what questions he had about restorative practices, a teacher claimed, “To be honest, I don’t really think about restorative practices that often, to have questions about it” (Interview, May 24, 2016). Culture should not be thought of as something that has been attained, for culture is not a product or an event but an ongoing process; it has no finish line. Speaking out of a social constructionist perspective, Hosking (2000) emphasizes that meaning must be viewed as ongoing, built upon each event. Drewery (2016) stresses that meaning occurs when people interact. The river flows and brings with it new culture. Van Ness (2014) emphasizes the need for a school to talk about its restorative culture every day for change to be sustained. Fullan (2007) posits that knowledge is valuable only in a social context. The interview I conducted with a support staff member provided a social space to dialogue about restorative practices, and the dialogue ultimately had an impact on students and culture, for the dialogue of the interview created meaning as it related to the use of restorative approaches. I was thankful that the staff member was excited enough to

share the experience that resulted because she had participated in the research interview.

To continually build culture, an organization needs to always be dialoguing. This is a demanding task, for other priorities push the desired culture to the back burner. W.J. Morgan and Guilherme (2012) describe dialogue as “sustained, constant and tireless” (p. 989). School leadership sought to create avenues for supporting teachers through the demands of culture change, but dialogue can take a back burner if not established as a priority. Over time, circles in classrooms and circles in staff meetings diminished as other priorities or the messiness of dialogue, trumped employing dialogue regularly (Theme #10). Speaking to dialogue and support, White (2016) conceives:

The gaps in an advantageous operation of RP lie in communication, support, and consistency. In terms of communication, there must be more dialogue between faculty members in classrooms and those in charge of implementing RP to assess where more support or feedback is needed and in what way. Teachers and those who are held accountable for practicing RP must have a more reliable support system and tools for using the practices. (p. 15)

Celebration

The research revealed a desire by leadership, by staff, and by students to celebrate the culture they participated in every day (Theme #11). Administration sought to tell the school’s success stories through social media, through a restorative practices video, and through stories of successful restorative interventions with students. Kotter (2009) upholds the need for administration to celebrate and to uphold short-term victories in the culture change process. Many teachers and support staff members had success stories of restorative circles and restorative dialogues whereby students had been affected

positively by restorative practices. Through assemblies, student rallies, public speaking forums, and fundraising events, students sought to continue to build positive spirit in their school. Roher (2008) cites the need for school leadership to provide opportunities for leading, empowering them to be a part of building culture. Every member of the school community needs to be reminded of the good, to uphold the beauty that staff and students experience every day in the school. Fullan (2007) stresses the need for a place for people to share successes. While research participants shared successes, employing fewer circles limits dialogue and ultimately provides less opportunity for celebration. Staff mentioned a lack of communication in regard to how restorative practices were being used by the front office. The lack of dialogue regarding how student concerns were being facilitated at the office level thereby resulted in a lack of modelling. Without a venue to dialogue specifically about restorative successes, the building and reinforcing of restorative culture became diluted.

Thomson (2010) suggests that changes within an organizational culture can appear to take hold but then fade away, simply taking the organization back to where it was. In the organization researched, I propose a slightly different perspective whereby some restorative processes took hold but the prevailing story from staff members was that restorative practices was not a dominant philosophy in the school. One staff member estimated that approximately 50% of the staff might use restorative practices. Deal and Petersen (1999) suggest that organizations have unifying myths within which the worldview of members of the organization rests. This worldview provides the foundation for culture building (or a lack of culture building). For many, the underlying myth was that restorative practices had been strong in the past and now were diluted and needed a

jumpstart. While research revealed that there was indeed room for growth, research showed that there also was a foundation of restorative practices. The principal, in speaking to restorative practices in Theme #10, described the philosophy as a way of being, engrained within the school: “The culture is the culture” (Interview, April 26, 2016). As the river flowed and culture was engrained, even though part of the restorative practice deposit within the culture was diluted, the river left behind evidence of embedded restorative practices. Through the research, administration, staff, and students demonstrated evidence of restorative practices and restorative culture, reflecting Schein’s (2004) definition of culture whereby there are shared assumptions that are considered valid enough to be taught to people new to the organization, to feel, reason, and understand. The following section highlights how restorative practices continue to be reflected in the school community.

What Does Restorative Look Like?

A staff member wanted to know if there was a school out there where restorative practices were a daily priority and what did that look like. And yet, while not system wide, the school revealed language, structures, and values of a restorative school. The value that students and staff revealed in dialoguing (Theme #4), the focus on needs and care (Theme #6), and the approaches to conflict resolution (Theme #7) demonstrated the restorative culture embedded to some degree in the school community.

Circles

If I were to ask a student what restorative practices are, she or he could not provide a direct answer. Nonetheless, each of the students in the focus group associated circles with restorative practices. Furthermore, circles were a very familiar structure and

practice for students. Each student had participated in many circles, and while research revealed that students did not use circles in every class, they could each name teachers and staff members who conducted circles (Theme #4). Likewise, the students could name circle processes that were successful and those that did not go well. Reitz (2015) stressed the need for dialoging systems, without which genuine dialogue with adequate space does not occur. Research showed that the staff members and students expressed the value of learning through personal voice and firsthand experience rather than relaying information from a secondary source. A common pattern emerged out of providing space for dialogue; dialoguing provides a voice, and voice allows one to tell a story. Firsthand stories revealed needs, emotions, feelings, and diversity. The response to personal stories is empathy, or stepping into the shoes of another. In speaking to servant leadership, Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) state: “Interpersonal acceptance is about empathy: being able to cognitively adopt the psychological perspective of other people and experience feelings of warmth and compassion” (p. 252). Empathy, or stepping in the shoes of the other, was expressed by participants in the research as a critical piece of dialogue. White (2016) stresses that empathy is more powerful when it occurs face-to-face.

During the research administration, teachers and support staff articulated the need for students and staff to feel important as individuals and in the tasks they do each day. Speaking specifically to students, the principal pronounced: “Adolescents really need to know that they are important. If they feel marginalized, they won’t learn anything.” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Community members need to dialogue to understand their value. Regular dialogue becomes a critical resource for both staff and students, for it is through dialogue that both staff and students reveal insight into both curriculum and life

(Theme #9). Administration and teachers expressed how they were frequently surprised by what was articulated when voice was provided and dialogue was encouraged. Speaking out of social capital theory, Liou and Chang (2008) viewed social capital as the resources that come out of being in relation. Dialogue enables social capital to be continually constructed. Drewery (2016), speaking from a social constructionist perspective, deems that social reality, including our knowledge of other things, other people, and ourselves, ultimately must be viewed as codependent or interdependent constructions that exist only in relation. When a learning environment is high in social cohesions, this results in those in the community experiencing fairness and trust (Cloete, 2014; van der Gaag & Snijders, 2004).

Trust, Care, and Needs

In speaking to leadership, Fullan (2007) and Greenleaf and Spears (2002) speak to the moralistic component of leading. The research exhibited the importance of this moralistic component when leading out of a restorative paradigm. Specifically, they spoke to trust, care, and needs (Theme #6).

Trust. Reitz (2015) described a trusting environment as one where one not only feels safe, but an environment where one takes action because he/she trusts that he/she will be safe in action rather than safe in passivity. Students must be safe to speak, safe to risk, and safe to name things of concern. Reitz expressed the need for more research into how one comes to trust. Those in the research uttered the need for consistency for trust, for trust is delicate. Support staff articulated that students needed to know what they were getting when they dialogued with staff. For students to trust, they needed to know that staff members were genuinely listening and that they could trust a staff member's

response. Students expressed how even a small response in class—calling publicly on a student, or making assumptions without hearing a student’s story—could be enough to dissuade the student from trusting the teacher. Students did not return to staff for support, nor did they reveal truth if the responses of staff members were inconsistent. I was struck during the research by an event where two students were cut from a team, an event that I would believe would bring anger and frustration toward the coach who cut them. Yet, they were not only willing to work with the staff member, but more so were proactive in supporting the staff member. From my perspective, these students recognized that the staff member ultimately sought to support their best interests, even when making difficult decisions regarding the students (Journal, May 25, 2016).

The trust relationship also needed to correspond between teachers and administration, for teachers also required consistency, a safe place to speak, and to be listened to. Without trust, they were very unlikely to dialogue with their leadership. Caldwell and Dixon (2010) acknowledged trust as critical for leading, specifically for developing relationships, for trust empowers others while also communicating that leadership believes in the abilities and gifts of his/her followers.

Care. Adult participants expressed that they wanted students to know that they cared for them. In Theme #6, the principal exclaimed: “I hope that they know and understand that they are cared for and that everybody is there to look out for them” (Interview, April 26, 2016). Likewise, students in the focus group expressed the importance of being cared for, as they described the importance of knowing teachers are there for them and willing to listen to them. Schat (2016) notes the importance of care theory and care practice working together, for while teachers may intend to demonstrate

care for students, this is not always the experience and perception of students. A focus on individual achievement can drown out messages of care for students (Smylie et al., 2016). Noddings (2003) upholds care as requiring a reciprocal relationship involving the individual caring and the individual cared for. Care is possible only when both parties contribute. To create space that allows all parties to participate, a context of care must be immediately established. First impressions are crucial, for creating perceptions of being uncaring may deny people entering dialogic space. Schat notes, “Because care must be perceived, received, and completed in the context of a relationship, it is important for caring teachers to be much more reflective about their care communication” (p. 14). If one cannot think one’s way into relation, then a corollary is that one cannot solely think one’s way into caring. While caring can be demonstrated, to clarify perceptions care also must be communicated. Administration, teachers, and support staff need be intentional in leading dialogue with each staff member and student they work with, for care can be further clarified through communication. A reciprocal relationship strengthens *with* relationships whereby followers recognize both the high support and high expectations (Wachtel & McCold, 2004) received from leaders, and as a result the followers are more likely to reciprocate with high support or care, and with high expectations for their leaders.

Montellanos (2016) upholds that both restorative practices and care ethics are positioned in a relational view, rejecting views of people as solely independent and self-sufficient. Nonetheless, she notes a lack of literature in regard to care and caring relationships in restorative justice: “Therefore, in addition to recognizing the value for care and caring relations, restorative justice should take the relational view of persons

from care ethics, which is already present in its restorative practices” (p. 27). A clear view of people as relational is necessary in both proactive practices and reactive responses to conflict for a restorative philosophy to be explicit in working out of a relational foundation. Speaking out of a theory of servant leadership, Northouse (2013) reasons that caring leaders who care for followers create a culture that saturates the organization. The caring leader addresses *needs*, and in addressing needs not only impacts her or his organization but ultimately impacts the local community and greater society.

Needs. Underlying every interaction in a school should be a context of considering needs. Students expressed frustration with teachers who engaged without knowing a student’s story. Being cut from a team, family joys and/or concerns, interactions with other students or adults in the building, or even one’s comprehension of the learning goals and success criteria for the day can impact the needs of a student. Vaandering (2013) uses the analogy of an iceberg, whereby we only see 10% of the iceberg and 90% remains hidden under the water. She challenges educators to put on scuba gear and to enter the frigid water of needs in order to care for the well-being of students, creating an environment that seeks to eliminate harm and uphold safety. Speaking to servant leadership, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) stress that addressing only learning needs is not adequate. Both personal needs and learning needs need to be addressed for students to flourish in the learning environment. Shields (2010) deems that transformative leaders seek to meet the needs of followers through courage and activism, whereby meeting needs serves to impact followers, impact the organization, and impact society. Burns (1978) spoke to the need for transformational leaders to have a vision of

addressing the higher level needs of followers, for this impacted the motivation of followers and thereby increased their motivational investment. The research revealed this call for addressing the holistic needs of students, as a support staff member in Theme #9 spoke to the necessity of responding to conflict: “Now I will prioritize the conflict, because I understand that the learning can’t occur first” (Interview, May 30, 2016).

Conflict

The research revealed that for some staff members, a restorative school presented as a community with an absence of conflict, whereby students would not engage in “little” misbehaviours that could be quashed with a more punitive response to student indiscretion. Some participants considered that being relational was adequate to a point but that turning to dialogue and relational approaches for conflict was insufficient. For others, being relational in every circumstance was the *modus operandi*, desiring to positively shape students and staff regardless of the circumstances. Drewery (2007) sees a true restorative culture as requiring members of the school community to partake in respectful relationships across the organization: the need for corresponding relationships of with-ness is essential for the engraining of restorative practices. The power of restorative practices is not in producing a lack of conflict, for as Kazepedis (2010) previously stated, when people are involved, interactions will not be perfect: There will be conflict. The power of restorative practices is having processes and systems of dialogue for responding to conflict in a way that honours the worth and the voice of everyone impacted by the conflict. The research divulged that students who had been treated well in previous dialogues were more likely to divulge truth to care for other members of the school community such that the process of conflict resolution can be

initiated.

The restorative questions were an integral process for responding to conflict. In Theme #3, a support staff member spoke to how the questions provided a foundation for responding to conflict:

I think it is easier to just talk, but sometimes if you are not used to investigating a situation or figuring out what is going on, you might not have all of the right questions to ask, and you might miss something. And I sort of felt that going back to those basic questions really helped me to find truth in situations, and helped me to help kids who might have been bullied, or might have been negatively affected by someone else, and so I sort of felt that all of that helped me do my job.

(Interview, April 14, 2016)

Language of the restorative questions was evident in many of the responses provided by staff in regard to how they employ restorative practices. It was common for participants to speak to asking *what happened?* to speak about *feelings*, to talk about *impact*, to ask *who has been affected*, and to ask *how to make things right*. These responses reflected how the language of the restorative questions had changed the language of the school culture, not only in terms of responding to conflict but as language used throughout the context of a school day.

Administration shared how students came to them in order to make the school aware of potential fights. Likewise, through circle processes, students shared their observations and insights about conflict on the playground in order to help staff solve an increase in student conflict. The student who shares pertinent information with staff or administration is viewed as one who seeks to build community rather than viewed as a rat

or a nark who shares information solely to penalize another member of the school community. Mirsky (2007) suggests a restorative culture is revealed when students advocate for themselves and their peers in order that the school is a safe environment for all.

There are so many ways in which a school can deny equity to members of the school community. Staff addressed that unresolved conflict, misunderstanding, or a broken relationship impacts both staff and students and ultimately inhibits the learning process. Addressing conflict must be viewed not as a way to remove individuals from the learning process, but rather to return them to the learning process (Theme #5). Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) advocate for relational leaders who create space for dialogue, facilitate diverse viewpoints, and view the conflict resolution process as learning itself. Costello et al. (2009) deem that a key to upholding equity is to involve the community in resolving conflict, for decisions made by single individuals are more likely to come out of a context of power-over rather than with-ness. I considered my previous work studying discretionary factors associated with decision-making and leadership (Webb, 2009) and how providing voice offers more than one perspective, expanding the discretionary factors taken into consideration when decisions are made. In supporting the decision-making of administration, voice ultimately serves the best interests of students, as decisions are based upon multiple factors rather than a single individual (Journal, April 7, 2016).

Speaking to how the culture has transformed over time, I was moved by the story of the *pencil*, shared by a support staff member in Theme #10, and how such a small object could create such a negative interaction, denying care, denying relation, and

denying a culture that addresses needs:

There would be calls, people being sent out... for not having pencils, not having paper... there was just no patience. Obviously from a teacher perspective, it is frustrating. You plan this lesson, you are here, you give them clear instructions, and people are going astray. I feel like the culture has changed, because we have just been educated a lot more. They really understand that asking a kid, “Why did you do that?” might be the worst thing, because they don’t know why. They did it, and it was dumb, and now you get to help them figure it out, right? Something as simple as that, I think has eliminated a lot of problems.... And a lot of conflict... like power struggles. I don’t think students are being challenged in the same way, to be honest. I feel like teachers aren’t yelling at students as much, and I think that changes a lot. (Interview, April 14, 2016)

An administrator noted that if the goal of an educator is to punish a student, he or she is likely in the wrong profession. While one may expound a goal for positive relations, the relational barriers of systemic structures, educational stereotypes, or simple exhaustion on the part of an educator can result in punitive responses. Restorative approaches provide an underpinning from which one may break the punitive structures that can dominate educational institutions and direct everyone in a school community to respond out of relation, always looking to the interests of the other.

While not used school wide, the research demonstrated that restorative processes were being used in the school. The use of circles, use of the restorative questions, and the way members of the community responded to conflict demonstrated evidence of the use of restorative practices. Values including trust and care were evident in both staff and

students as they worked with each other. Finally, the focus on needs as a way to change school culture is integral to restorative practices and was evident throughout the research.

Summary

Chapter Five is a discussion triangulating the 12 themes of Chapter Four, research related to leading restorative culture change in a school setting, and the research questions: What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture? How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community? What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community?

The first section of the chapter discussed the role of leadership in instilling the culture. Leadership needed to instill a restorative vision, manage perceptions of the vision, and combat resistance to the vision. Leadership needed to be intentional in instilling restorative practices, employing microrelationality, developing structures for dialogue, and encouraging corresponding relationships amongst members of the school community. The restorative model of relational culture building stressed the need for leadership throughout the organization to recognize that culture begins in one-on-one encounters. Finally, the need for leadership to establish how the culture will be evaluated was examined.

The second section in the chapter examined how the implementation process was experienced by the members of the school community. Investigating the consequences continuum, the section started by looking at accountability, the desire by some staff to draw lines in the sand rather than trust dialogic processes, and how staff negotiated proactive and reactive restorative practices. The section continued with the foundation of

dialogue to restorative practices, the need for modelling, concerns with the dilution of restorative practices, and the need to celebrate as a community including celebrating restorative practices, learning, and the character of both staff and students.

The final section addressed what restorative culture looked like in this school community. A primary process associated with restorative practices was that of the circle, as both staff and students associate participating in circles with the restorative approaches. The language of the restorative questions was evident both for responding to conflict and in daily learning tasks. The school community correlated restorative practices with trust, care, and needs, viewing these attributes as critical to a restorative culture. Finally, staff and students spoke to how the school addresses conflict as integral to upholding an effective restorative community.

McCluskey (2014a) believes that a restorative environment is one where people in the school community desire more restorative practices, for the current culture is not restorative enough. The majority of the people in interviews and in observations desired a greater focus on restorative practices. A specific support staff member mourned the dilution of restorative practices in the school, for she believed she was surrounded by colleagues who had the skills and the passion to be more intentional about establishing a stronger restorative culture in the school. And yet, playing on a motto from a Canadian bank, I desire to express to the school, “You are more restorative than you think!” The evidence for me is how students viewed their school and their learning. While they expressed moments of conflict, the students in the focus group were unanimous in that they generally felt cared for and that they appreciated the place they came to every day to learn. For me, a restorative classroom is one that a student desires to return to each day.

Both administrators spoke to how students at the school wanted to be in class and wanted to learn: The school was a safe place to be in relation and to enter the learning process (Theme #1). The students cared for their school because they felt cared for. Teachers and support staff were less willing to attribute the positive learning environment to their work, and yet I believe that the staff could benefit from celebrating the culture they have developed at the school. Staff mentioned that the school was great because students are changed, the parents are great, and that there the cultural diversity makes for an effective culture. While I believe these factors play a role in the school's culture, I think the teachers deserve to pat themselves on the back and to toot their own horns for the investment they have made and for how that investment has changed the culture of the school. The focus by staff on relationships, caring, dialogue, and needs exposed a school that sought to uphold the best interests of students. Moments of conflict diverted that restorative culture, and there is work that must continue to happen to direct that river toward the desired culture. Nonetheless, in my placer mining of the banks and the bed of the river through this research, I panned out some incredible deposits left behind by the flowing of this school's restorative relational culture.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

I began this study by suggesting the need to examine the response by Ontario schools to progressive discipline legislation, specifically those schools that have chosen to fulfill progressive discipline through a philosophy of restorative practices, a perspective that seeks to examine harm and misbehaviour as a violation of people rather than a violation of laws (Llewellyn, 2012; Reimer, 2011). Blood (2005) proposes a need for schools to examine changes to school culture from a view of investing in relationships rather than controlling student behaviour. While literature suggested that students in schools that undertook a restorative philosophy were safer and happier (Hendry, 2009), measures of restorative success were often reduced to numbers in the forms of suspensions, expulsions, and reduced recidivism (Llewellyn et al, 2013; Reimer, 2015). Costello et al. (2009) add that reports of the effectiveness of restorative practices are generally reduced to being anecdotal.

To better understand the journey of leading restorative practices in schools, a case study was employed of a middle school in southern Ontario that had undertaken a 4-year process of implementing a restorative culture. My research was founded on three questions: What is the role of leadership in the process of developing a restorative culture? How was the process of implementing restorative culture change experienced by the school community? What evidence is there that restorative practices are reflected in the school community? Through interviews with administration, teachers, and support staff; a focus group with students; observations; field notes; and journaling, I pursued addressing the research questions.

Restorative Practices: A Countercultural Approach

Modern restorative practices are framed as lacking a strong theoretical foundation (Barrett, 2013; Llewellyn et al. 2013), and therefore a conceptual framework was constructed for examining the leading of restorative culture change within a school using the leading of cultural change (Blackmore, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Smylie et al., 2016), relational leadership theory (Reitz 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2006), and a theory of dialogue (Buber, 1923/1970; Reitz 2015). While examining restorative practices out of the context of relationships has been used in literature, restorative practices have not been examined in the context of relational leadership theory.

My research suggests that while school leadership can seek to establish a cultural shift from being a student-controlled environment to an environment that upholds relationships with students, there is a need for members of the school community—administration, teachers, support staff, and students—to continually examine all processes and functions within a school and how learning, decision-making, and responses to conflict can always be conducted in the context of relation (Hopkins, 2003). The ability of the community to assess the culture shift starts with school leadership that continually upholds the relational vision and provides opportunities to assess the vision. Fullan (2006) names that successful change in schools requires an examination of pedagogy, curriculum, and professional development, for change must impact the entire school.

The study reveals that schools need a way to establish a relational vision, and then must have ways to assess the relationality within the school, for leadership within a school cannot determine the success of its change efforts without first naming the

expected change and then having structures and processes for assessing the change.

Fletcher (2012) names that meaning arises out of social interaction and therefore, to study organizations in a relational context, it is necessary to study communication, the space where social construction is created. Likewise, for schools to measure success out of a relational paradigm, it behooves them to assess and examine the dialogic processes employed in the school. To truly examine the relationality in a school, assessment must involve every member of the school community, for a school that truly desires to have people work *with* (Wachtel & McCold, 2004) each other, must be willing to receive input from everyone in the school. Hopkins (2003) advocates for restorative policies that are created by the school community.

The foundation of culture begins in encounters (Reitz, 2015) when people within a school community come into the same dialogic space. The research pushes all people in schools to examine every encounter that occurs and how those encounters may enhance trust or create shame, for every encounter has the potential to be positive or negative. This starts the moment any member of the school community walks into a school for the first time, specifically students. School leadership must continually be stepping into the shoes of students and gaining student perspective regarding all aspects of the school to ensure students are experiencing a culture that upholds trust and care. It is critical that schools regularly evaluate their practices and the degree to which the practices are restorative practices (Hopkins, 2003). Traditional responses to conflict—working out of a paradigm of punitive responses—have dehumanized those involved in conflict. Restorative practices reason that administrators, teachers, and staff members must seek to humanize students and staff members, upholding all others as worthy. While a restorative

line of reasoning seems natural and sensical, the truth is that it is countercultural.

Students in school do not always feel worthy, and they often feel objectified in an I–It relation rather than humanized in an I–Thou relation. If we desire students to flourish, we first must uphold their inherent worth. Restorative practices seek to create a culture that does so.

Thinking Relations Before Learning

Staff in schools have an enormous task as they seek to play a role in fulfilling both the learning needs and the social needs of the students in their trust. In an Ontario school, learning is generally measured first through the meeting of curricular expectations. Teachers walk into a building each day with the goal of supporting students in meeting the course expectations. By the end of the semester, the teacher needs to have taught each of the grade level expectations. When considering an organization that seeks to work out of a relational paradigm, there is seldom a list of check boxes for leadership and staff to critically assess the relationality of the culture and how social needs are met. Leadership within a school first needs to determine that leading relationally is critical for an effective learning environment. Then, the school needs to invest in creating relational opportunities, for it is far too easy to walk through the school day and to not create space for dialogue and voice. Bakhtin (as cited in Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011) upholds that “relational leaders are open to the present moment and to future possibilities, they engage in ‘questioning, provoking, answering, agreeing, objecting’ dialogue rather than dialogue that finalizes, materializes, explains, and kills casually, that drowns out another’s voice...” (p. 1437). A class can take place without a student being spoken to. A staff meeting can occur with many staff members saying nothing. Assessment can be a one-

way affair, whereby the teacher provides comments and a mark and then moves on without conversing with the student. Palmer (1998) suggests that learning must have community built through dialogic means, for learning occurs when others are able to test ideas and challenge biases; this does not happen when people are left to think alone.

Ultimately, we seek a learning culture in schools, but the learning goes beyond the course expectations. The staff in a school have the privilege of leading both students and colleagues in social learning, growing relationally with those they interact with each day. This learning that occurs is beyond the provincial expectations as it involves learning character, learning to dialogue, learning to build relationships, and learning to respond to conflict. White (2016) stresses the shift that is occurring:

A teacher should no longer be defined as one who instructs, rather one who fosters the safest and most positive environment for students' academic development. The teacher must know that before academic standards can be met students need to feel a part of, and supported by their communities. Students should be challenged to master the ability to build relationships and community before being challenged to be a competent writer, reader, or even an athlete. (pp. 23–24)

The research supports White's work in naming that teaching, to be effective, cannot be limited to a one-way relationship. Hersted and Gergen (2013) stress that traditional schooling was reliant on content, whereas relational leading relies on process. For learners, the paradigm shift transfers from preformed knowledge to a process of creating knowledge. This is true whether learning in the classroom or responding to conflict. When investing in students, staff seek their voices and challenge their relational capacity.

Consequently, the staff member creates a culture for learning that occurs in the context of student needs rather than out of a paradigm of student control. As stated by a teacher in Theme #10 in the study:

We spend too much time on technology... changing environments... changing grade levels... teaching... do you know what I mean? All these other things. We are really... I think that if you have a positive constructive culture, all of that stuff takes care of itself. (Interview, May 24, 2016)

The Meaning of Restorative

Wenger (1998) speaks to the need for communities of practice to negotiate meaning. In this research, the school community undertook a journey of negotiating the meaning of restorative practices: what it is and how one does it. Wenger deems there are two processes that must take place for a concept to have meaning: *participation* and *reification*. Participation is to share in the process with others including thinking, feeling, doing, or conversing. When participants experience a together-ness through participating, they can experience a mutual identity. Wenger views participation as a “social character of the experience of life” (p. 57). Reification is “to treat (an abstraction) as substantially existing or as a concrete material object” (p. 58). It is to make an abstraction into a thing. Wenger describes the need for balance in these two processes for there to be meaning.

I suggest that both participation and reification diminished over the lifetime of the restorative change endeavour, resulting in the dilution of the meaning of restorative practices. As the use of circles diminished both in classes and in staff meetings, the participation in restorative practices declined. Likewise, new staff didn’t have an opportunity to participate with others in the restorative practices, thereby providing no

opportunity to develop meaning. Without a unified vision, concrete policy, and continuous training, community members lacked the resources to continue to reify the concept of restorative practices. The research demonstrated that some people had continued to develop meaning through participation with staff or by reifying their own meaning through engaging personally with resources. Likewise, the research showed that restorative knowledge existed within the community but was not always acted upon. By participating in a research interview, the concept of restorative practices was reified and the meaning resulted in participation as their knowledge was applied to situations within the school. Leadership must constantly engage in participating and reifying, concretizing the meaning of restorative through engaging the school community and through providing ways in which to continually acquire knowledge in order to consistently be developing the culture. The river takes its own course when there are no forces acting upon it. It is the tireless work of leadership investing in fulfilling the vision with others that allows a culture to continually take form.

Does an Encounter Impact the Culture of a School?

The principal stated that it was difficult to speak to what degree restorative practices ultimately impacted the culture while also stating that circles and community building were the core of the change in the school. In examining a school culture from a restorative perspective and examining restorative practices from a relational leadership perspective, culture is viewed as a complex interchange of interactions in dialogic space. Uhl-Bien (2006) stresses that organizations, when viewed as a collective, are seen as an ongoing social process. Abell and Simons (2000) state that organizations change due to relations and language at all levels. To work out of relationality and to believe that

culture is the sum of interactions within an organization, I believe we must consider that every encounter impacts the culture. Every interaction one has in a school in some capacity impacts future decisions by that student regarding interacting with others and how they trust, care, learn, and lead with others. Hosking (2000) deems that a constructionist perspective is satisfied through ongoing achievements, fulfilled in events and acts of interaction.

Do We Need Restorative Practices?

Reimer (2015) stresses that restorative approaches can be transformative, but restorative practices are not necessary for such an outcome. Prior to the research, I would have argued vigorously with her on this point. This is no longer the case. While I remain an advocate of restorative practices, the power of restorative practices is in humanizing others and creating safe dialogic spaces in order to invest in relationships and to build supportive communities. Restorative practices employ effective means for dialoguing and building relationships.

I was challenged to consider restorative practices as a *tool* versus restorative practices as being the *toolbox* for establishing culture. Throughout the research, I have reflected on this metaphor. I have first concluded that no job is done with a single tool. Any job, especially large jobs, require multiple tools. Furthermore, some tools are critical throughout the entirety of a job. Upon completing this research, I am inclined to view restorative practices as a tool, and that building culture is the result of using many tools. Education cannot thrive on restorative practices alone. Pedagogy, resources, cultural trends, and board initiatives are just a few of the tools that can impact culture creation. And yet, even though I am inclined to view restorative practices as a tool, I see that tool

as more critical than I ever did before. The need to constantly apply the tool known as restorative practices, to uphold all others as worthy, to lead out of relationships, to invest in dialogue, to uphold care and trust, and to meet needs is essential every day all the time. In responses to conflict, in addressing staff, in building community, in leading assemblies, and in teaching curriculum, our schools need to be relational. A relational paradigm is limited—and ineffective—when restricted to a specific aspect of education, whether that is community building, pedagogy, or conflict resolution. Restorative practices, in the context of a relational foundation, need to permeate the entire culture to truly be viewed as a philosophical tool that impacts the culture (Hopkins, 2003).

Contributions of the Study

This study on leading restorative culture change makes contributions to current literature and practice regarding relational leadership, challenges relationality as it pertains to the work of schools, upholds the potential for restorative practices in schools, challenges current paradigms in teacher education, and causes one to examine research methods in the study of leadership. In particular, I believe it challenges educators and researchers to be deliberate in taking on the arduous and messy task of changing the flow of the river, for without continually directing the river, it is very easy for the river to create its own path. We must be intentional in redirecting our educational system—from teacher education and research to school leadership and classroom pedagogy—in order that students ultimately flourish as they partake in the learning process in schools.

Relational Leadership

This study reveals that school leadership can instill profound change in a school through a common school vision. The research demonstrates the impact that a principal

can have on staff by establishing a vision and leading staff to work out of the vision. Schein (2017) advocates that for leadership to establish a psychologically safe change process for members in the organization, the first step is to “provide a compelling positive vision” (p. 328). They must believe that the change will result in a more effective organization. The research demonstrated that by working out of a common vision, leadership can establish a safe and equitable learning environment that upholds high expectations and high support for everyone in the school community.

The responses of both staff and students in the study reveal the desire for a culture that creates trust, upholds care, and meets individual needs. The study demonstrates how restorative practices can serve as a philosophical foundation for enabling leadership to attend to the needs of members of the school community, generating positive change in individuals and thereby in the school culture. Palmer (1998) maintains that communities are dynamic structures, and thereby leadership is needed continually in order to maintain a strong community. Greenleaf (1970), in speaking to servant leadership, deems that “administrators have the major responsibility for institutional performance that merits trust” (p. 115). The processes of restorative practices—including the restorative questions, circles, and formal restorative conferences—establish a foundation for initiating encounters, engaging in dialogue, and building relationships on which to build a foundation of trust and care. Freire (2000) states that “revolutionary leaders must follow the path of dialogue and of communication” (p. 162). It would behoove school leadership to consider how schools could further integrate dialogic restorative practices into the daily operations of a school. This could include staff meetings, professional development, parent–teacher–student conferences, student assessment, types of pedagogy, and the

physical layout and furniture in classrooms, such that the learning process can maximize the voices of those in the learning community.

The need for leadership to articulate a clear and concise vision of relationality was seen in this study. A school-wide vision of relationality needs to permeate every policy, process, and pedagogy in a school. Reitz (2015), in speaking to relational leadership, holds that it is a “fantasy that we operate as individual beings as opposed to being very, very common and the same” (p. 239). Leadership needs to articulate the need to be relational. Fullan (1999) deems that the long-term success of organizations is dependent on relationships. A vision of relationality starts with understanding that people in schools learn together in community, and so their interactions impact each other and thus the organizational culture. Ontario’s *progressive discipline* legislation promotes a whole-school approach to establishing safe learning environments, including “building healthy and respectful relationships throughout the whole school community” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 1). A vision for progressive discipline cannot be restricted to conflict but rather must permeate the whole culture of learning. A relational vision directs the training, professional development, strategizing, and pedagogy of the school.

In promoting a vision of relationality, leaders must also lead with relationality. Hersted and Gergen (2013) uphold relational leading not as a personal attribute but as an activity. In this way, leadership is not restricted to the individual but is brought forth through interactions and relating. The practices of restorative practices—dialogue, circles, questioning, conferencing—can serve as processes for leaders to fulfill relational leadership as they seek to create a relational and restorative culture.

The study revealed the need to have a model for leadership to assess the vision. Llewellyn (2012) stresses that relational cultures could be assessed through alternative means including highlighting “collaborative processes, improvement in skills, understanding, social relations, and the creation of a stronger, positive sense of community” (p. 308). A clear vision allows school leadership to work with staff members to establish and execute goals and to determine criteria for assessing the progress of instilling the vision.

Relationality and Restorative Practices in Schools

This research forces administrators and educators to challenge the factory model of schools whereby control and efficiency have dictated education and learning. Traditionally, rows of students have faced toward the front of a classroom, where the only eye contact a student would have would be with the teacher: an individualistic perspective of education. Dewey (1907) spoke against education that focused solely on the individualistic growth of a child and the desire by society to judge schools based on individualistic standards: the factory model of education. “Whether we have in mind the discussion of a new movement in education, it is especially necessary to take the broader, or social view” (Dewey, 1907, p. 20). DeNicolo (2016) stresses that students must make social connections in order to learn socially. A social constructionist view of education, whereby members of the classroom community learn in a model of with-ness, eradicates the factory model, as schools are viewed as centers for curricular learning and social learning. As schools become centers of social learning, the character of students is influenced, or how they act in relation to others. Schools then graduate students who enter society not as individuals, but as members of society. Palmer (1998) upholds that

communities best advance knowledge not through competition but through conflict, for he sees resolving conflict as a communal experience.

This research uncovers the value of circles for establishing classroom culture, for enhancing learning, and for responding to conflict. It has been my experience as an educator that teachers believe circles to be something used in the kindergarten class. I would argue that the kindergarten classes are doing something right, as they uphold voice and encourage relation. Educators need to make circles an integral part of the classroom experience and not view circles as independent from learning. While circles can be used intentionally and solely for creating community, circle processes can be used for dialogue regarding curricular content and for student assessment, thereby enhancing culture and climate (Costello et al., 2010).

Making circles and dialogue central to the learning culture can work to enhance student relations and to develop both classroom culture and school culture. Only through creating opportunities for encounter can school staff initiate the process of building relationships within the classroom. Likewise, relational processes and dialogue must be encouraged at the staff level. Leadership needs to lead staff to see the value of building relations and dialoguing, including the regular use of circles with staff. Care, trust, and needs are values that must also must be grown amongst staff. In the study, staff articulated the value of sharing and encouraging in staff circles. Yet, speaking to dialogue during staff meetings or professional development, some staff may retort, *all we did is talk*. Dialogue must be viewed as a valuable part of the business of schools in order for schools to be effective. Rather than simply integrating circles into school culture, the research reveals the need to make circles integral to school. Schools must reassess their

physical layout and consider how every room in a school—classrooms, staff rooms, libraries, offices—promote relationality and dialogue.

Dialoguing can be a vulnerable experience. Nonetheless, the research demonstrated that school leadership, teachers, and support staff must be intentional in *interfering* by boldly initiating dialogue with students, other staff members, parents, and community members. Dialogue serves as a bridge to establish and navigate space with others. A society based around digital communication and social media limits face-to-face conversation and “polyphonic and heteroglossic” (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011) dialogue. Restorative practices encourage individuals to enter dialogue, establish how they enter dialogue, and provide forms for leading dialogue to uphold the value of voice, the value of one’s story, and the value of others to continue to proactively and reactively grow and flourish.

Fullan (2001a) names in his research that “the single factor common to every successful change initiative is that relationships improve” (p. 5). He names that when relationships improve, things get better. Fullan’s overarching statement regarding relationships takes for granted the dialogic investment that must occur for relationships to change in the first place. Likewise, he names that when relationships get worse, change ground is lost. This would be in opposition to the implementation dip Fullan (2001b) speaks of when implementing change and the opposition that exists when change is initiated.

The research revealed that for some members of school community, the change initiatives must take hold before relationships improve. This is true specifically for students, who often hold little power in the initial stages of school change. Blackmore

(2013) stresses that regardless of the strength of the relationships, inclusiveness must be practiced. The research stresses the need to uphold the value of all people at all times. When others are acting at their worst, other members of the school community must step up and respond out of their best, upholding the value of the individual and seeking to restore the individual to the community.

Policy, Restorative Practices, and Relationality

The research reveals the need for policy as it pertains to restorative practices in schools. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) articulate that policy must be developed around new practices, specifically restorative practice. They suggest that policy should be developed as culture changes, for if developed right away, the policy can come out of old thinking rather than be an articulation of the new culture. Cameron and Thorsborne (as cited in Hopkins, 2003) stress the need for a *relationship management policy* instead of a behaviour management policy. Hopkins suggests that restorative policy must be integral to other school policies including teaching, learning, special education, and equity. She recommends a policy checklist that includes openness, trust, respect, feelings, and needs. She also advocates for processes that empower people to resolve their own problems. Hopkins advocates that rather than only creating a restorative policy, schools must consider how restorative practices can be integrated into every policy, event, lesson, and meeting that happens in a school.

The research revealed that without policy, there was no grounding for establishing restorative practices and processes and for evaluating processes. Failing to fully define restorative practices resulted in multiple perspectives of what restorative practices were and how they should be employed. While restorative practices are grounded in a

relational philosophy and may have different articulations depending on the needs of a school, leadership within a school can establish both definitions and processes. These processes serve not only staff but the entire school community. Policy can serve to direct culture change in order that leadership can seek to fulfill its restorative vision.

Restorative practices and relationality have the potential to fulfill existing policy. *The Ontario Leadership Framework* (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013) promotes relationality at many levels within the school system. At the school level, the document promotes “building trusting relationships with and among staff, students and parents” (p. 12), “building productive relationships with families” (p. 12), and retaining teachers through “creating a shared vision and building trusting relationships” (p. 13). At the board level, the document encourages a policy-oriented board of trustees to “create productive relationships in an engaging, supportive climate of excellence” (p. 17). Restorative practices can serve as a scaffold, employing dialogic techniques, relationality, and I–Thou philosophy to fulfill the mandates of the *Ontario Leadership Framework* in order that “organizations can put advanced leadership concepts to work on a daily basis to meet educational goals and achieve concrete results (Institute for Education Leadership, 2013, p. 2).

Teacher Education

Kitchen (2005b) coined the term *relational teacher education* (RTE). This research supports the need for relational teacher education and how components of RTE support a restorative learning culture, emphasizing the need for modelling how to invest in relationships, respect and empathy in community relationships, and supporting individuals in problem solving and resolving conflict. RTE promotes teacher educators

who respect and empathize with teacher candidates and who support preservice teachers in addressing issues, problems, and concerns. Furthermore, RTE upholds teacher educators in continually building relations with preservice teachers, for the “most important element is a commitment to relationally knowing one’s preservice teachers” (Kitchen, 2016, p. 22).

This study impacts teacher education by upholding the need for dialogic processes to be utilized in teacher education programs whereby these programs model a relational philosophy for teacher candidates as they prepare for practicums and for teaching careers. The research underscores the need for *corresponding structures of dialogue* or dialogic structures that look similar in different parts of the organization, in order to establish relational foundations. While corresponding structures allow for *intramodelling* or modelling within the organization, supporting *intermodelling* through teacher education programs enables corresponding relational structures of learning that bridge teacher preservice classes with classes taught in the K to 12 system, strengthening relational learning culture in schools. As revealed in the study, educators need to *interfere* with students by intentionally engaging in dialogue to initiate relational building processes. Teacher educators can serve as this model for preservice teachers, establishing relational and restorative processes that can be applied in community building, pedagogy, assessment, and conflict resolution.

The study upholds the need for restorative processes that promote respect and empathy to build effective communities of learning, whereby empathy comes as a result of engaging members of the school community in face-to-face dialogue. The study revealed that respect starts with being modelled by leadership and teachers, and through

dialogic processes the staff in the school sought to mould the students to respect each other. Establishing corresponding structures in teacher education programs by using relational philosophies such as RTE provides a relational model for teacher candidates to experience and then implement in their own classrooms to establish their own learning communities. Palmer (1998) stresses that learning requires an effective and supportive community. He notes that these communities are built around dialogic structures, allowing participants to grow in knowledge through providing safe places to bring forth ideas and biases. In speaking to emphasizing respect and empathy in teacher education, Kitchen (2005a) notes the need for students to dialogue, thereby validating knowledge and building a strong classroom community.

Finally, the research demonstrates that ownership comes from voice, enabling students to take ownership of both learning and conflict resolution. A teacher in the study noted that with voice comes ownership, and with ownership comes investment. Forcing students to dialogue or failing to allow students to dialogue disables ownership, investment, and engagement. Kitchen (2005b) notes that establishing an environment whereby preservice teachers can reflect on personal stories allows teachers to learn by sharing their personal histories, thereby taking ownership of their professional learning and directing the philosophy that will structure their pedagogy. He notes that “humans socially construct knowledge” (p. 22). Establishing teacher education programs that support preservice teachers in taking ownership in developing their philosophy and navigating their concerns and biases supports new teachers in taking ownership of the teaching and learning processes. Ultimately, this means teachers take ownership of their students and their needs.

Principal Preparation

Hersted and Gergen (2013) propose “that dialogue is not simply an after-the-fact process for sharing information; it is a process on which the very life of the organization depends” (p. 18). They suggest areas where leaders will need to dialogue in order to address challenges faced by organizations including navigating conflict that remains unspoken, making decisions that not all organizational members agree with, introducing change, and considering views of those outside the organization. It would behoove principal preparation programs in Ontario to teach the concepts of restorative practices to up-and-coming school leaders. Restorative practices uphold the importance of socially constructing organizations, provide structures for dialogue, promote proactive means for community building and creating a safe learning environment, and are effective for addressing conflict. Restorative practices can be proposed and taught as an effective way to create a positive culture and to fulfill policies including *progressive discipline* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012) and the *The Ontario Leadership Framework* (2013).

Contributions to Research and Literature

The study serves to link relational leadership theory (RLT; Uhl-Bien, 2006) and restorative practices, linking two relational paradigms. The constructionist approach of RLT pushes the need for dialogic space in order to work out of a relational paradigm. Dialogue becomes the mediator in the space that separates those in dialogue, establishing a context for creative meaning-making. Specific to the study, RLT is valued in the study of culture (Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012), for to study individuals in dialogic space is to study the building of culture. Restorative practices serve as a process for creating dialogic spaces in order to build culture. The research challenges the Ontario Ministry of

Education to develop tools that uphold relationality in regard to *progressive discipline* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012), assessment and evaluation as it pertains to the *Growing Success* document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010b), and in curricular expectations. Promoting relationality in all aspects of schooling establishes a foundation for developing positive and safe relational learning cultures where staff and learners flourish.

The study informs the use of microrelationality in schools and the need to consider all processes as working out of relation. The use of microrelationality contrasts with the concept of micropolitics in educational leadership, whereby leading is primarily contextualized by power, policy, and emotional complexities (Beatty, 2014). While these attributes are still critical to microrelationality, rather than focusing on politics first through process, microrelationality is concerned first with people. A philosophy that is founded first in relationality establishes a foundation that starts with the needs of the individual in order to meet the needs of the organization.

The study emphasizes that qualitative research processes, by their dialogic nature, ultimately influence both the researcher and the participant. In creating dialogic space, the researcher involves the participant in meaning-making. Drewery (2016) states that the value of constructionist approaches is that every person is viewed as possessing the capability of creating meaning. Constructionist views seek to uphold the agency of each and every potential participant. Drewery views this as critical for relational research, specifically for restorative practices.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing research in the field of relational leadership. Eacott (2016) stresses that “understanding is achieved through describing the

unfolding actions of the social world in temporal and spatial conditions” (p. 8). He challenges the methodological individualism of traditional leadership studies and pushes for a relational approach to overcome “enduring issues in the scholarship of the field” (p. 11). The study contributes to constructionist views of leadership: how a restorative philosophy may in fact serve as a foundation for establishing how one enters research, and for employing dialogic processes for further studies in relational leadership.

Further Research

The *Promoting a Positive School Climate* document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016) states that “everyone has a role in promoting healthy relationships” (p. 1) and that Ontario’s whole school approach focuses on “building healthy relationships throughout the school community” (p. 1). A recent Ontario College of Teachers advisory, *Responding to the Bullying of Students* (2017) names that children may not be learning the skills necessary for building relationships, and that “all have a responsibility to keep students safe and to model positive and respectful relationships and attitudes for children” (p. 1). These are the only references to relationships in regard to responding to conflict and bullying. There are three areas in regard to positive school climates that could be further researched. First, the Ministry of Education needs to examine how each school is fulfilling *progressive discipline* legislation, a requirement for all schools. Second, further research is required into how restorative practices may serve as a foundational process for building healthy relationships in order to fulfil progressive discipline. Finally, research must be done as to how building proactive relational cultures can prevent bullying rather than solely relying on responding to bullying. While the advisory seeks to respond to bullying, this research reveals that if students do not know each other, do not trust each

other, do not care for each other, and are not empathetic toward each other, responses to conflict will be ineffective. This research did not directly examine the relationship between proactive building of relational cultures through restorative practices and how this impacts safety within a school, including the reduction of bullying.

Reimer (2011) named that there are few stories from which current schools can learn in regard to the implementation of restorative practices. More research is required in the leading of restorative cultures in Ontario. Stories are needed to support schools in engaging with restorative practices as a means to upholding *progressive discipline* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). The more researchers can engage with the successes and obstacles of building restorative cultures, the more literature can support school leadership in seeking to build relational learning environments that are engaging students in learning.

Freire (2000) names that to be dialogic is to be revolutionary. Further research is needed in the use of restorative dialogic processes for building positive relational cultures and effective learning cultures in schools. This research starts to touch on how dialogic processes can impact relationships and learning, establishing a foundation for a safe learning community where students can flourish. Examining how dialogue impacts a learning culture potentially can influence how leaders lead, how teachers deliver curriculum, how students learn, and how students are assessed. Furthermore, examining how dialogic processes are taught to teacher candidates and used by teacher candidates in education faculties is necessary in order to examine how this can support teacher candidates in developing dialogic learning cultures.

Finding schools that were using restorative practices was not an easy process. I uphold Bickmore's (2011) charge to determine why more schools are not employing restorative approaches. While this research expressed that there are obstacles to implementation and that restorative dilution can take hold, the research also revealed a great learning environment created by a caring staff. The learning and culture I experienced in this school would be beneficial to any learning environment, and examining why restorative cultures have not been engrained in more schools would be valuable. Further research examining barriers schools face in fulfilling a restorative culture would be valuable in order to determine if barriers are common in schools. Determining trends in roadblocks to implementation would provide a foundation for strategizing how to overcome these roadblocks.

The study reveals the need for further research in assessing and evaluating the use of restorative practices in both schools and classrooms. Llewellyn (2012) proposes that assessing collaboration, relations, and the culture of community are possible ways to evaluate restorative cultures in schools. Measuring the use of dialogue and examining pedagogical forms could also help schools to assess the impact of restorative practices. Nonetheless, current forms of evaluation are based on reduced exclusions and office visits, a view that is not relationally focused but punitively focused. Research is needed on developing and piloting an assessment tool that measures relationality in order that schools can evaluate out of a vision for working restoratively.

A question that came out of the semistructured interviews, specifically with administration, was: "Do students need to know what restorative practices are?" While the response in the research was that students need to know what they experience every

day as opposed to the philosophy, I would like to suggest that restorative practices and restorative culture could be made more powerful by students experiencing and understanding restorative practices. This reminded me of the Ontario *Growing Success* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010) document on *Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*. The document, in speaking to *learning goals and success criteria*, stresses that teachers and students have a “shared understanding of these goals and criteria as learning processes” (p. 28). The document suggests that having students cocreate goals and having them self-assess ultimately results in “increasing students’ engagement in and commitment to learning.” (p. 29). This is an incredible example of a restorative pedagogy working *with* students to learn out of high support and high expectations. I believe further research in having students work with educators to understand what restorative practices is, and how it works, would be valuable, examining how this could increase a student’s commitment to building relationships and resolving conflict.

Research: A Means of Supporting Growth and Change

I have been confronted by the constancy required by leaders for leading culture change. In writing about leadership within the school, with the objective of being factual about the story of the school and the people within the school, it is easy to sound like I am being critical of the leadership within the school. I have struggled with using theory and the research to critique this organization, for the school leadership has clearly sought to lead staff and students, in order to enhance the teaching experience for staff and the learning experience for students. By theory, the investment made by leadership could have been enhanced; by the perceptions of participants from the school community, that

experience could be improved. And yet, I interviewed and observed administration, teachers, and support staff members who are fighting to enrich the learning experiences of students within their school. Likewise, I interviewed students who are proud of the place where they get to learn each and every day. Just as conflict in this study was suggested as a means for learning, so too the critique offered here is intended to be a means for learning or a means for enhancing the great work that is already going on. Building culture is not something that is *done*; it is something that leadership is always *doing*.

The constancy required in building a culture was eye opening to me, because leadership cannot let go. This is in the middle of fulfilling a multitude of other demands that come across the desk of an administrator. Participants described it as juggling plates. Even while I was there, I watched administrators, teachers, and support staff navigate the Ontario mandated 60 minutes of every day math, EQAO, school fundraisers, students with very high needs, staff with health concerns, mental health concerns, a school drama production, and a myriad of other demands that impact the ability of leadership to keep the vision front and center on a day-to-day basis. In fact, it is in the leading of these activities and in the response to these demands, that the vision is fulfilled. The leadership within the school—both formal and informal—needs to continue to uphold the vision of the school in order to continue to turn the river toward the desired course. Without directing the river, the flow of the river directs its course. The nature of a case study provides opportunity for dialoguing through focus groups and interviews but also restricts most dialogue to these formal conversations. Critique is never easy, and this critique is intended not to bring members of the school community down but to continue to

encourage them as to how they can continue to improve the good work being done every day.

The Heart of the Matter

In closing, I believe it is critical to name not just restorative research, but relational research, as a heart matter. To create space and to engage in dialogue is to engage in the lives of others. To speak to trust, care, and empathy is, on some level, to love. This is a love that honours the worth and value of another human. Can one remain neutral in research? I hope not. Research is done to impact *people*. Greenleaf and Spears (2002) speak to love as having both subtle and infinite manifestations, and those manifestations are played out in one's liability. Taking on research is taking on the liability of seeking to positively impact people.

If one seeks to create learning cultures that bring students hope, he or she must likewise take on the liability of others and lead relationally. This liability is a noble act, whereby one commits to investing in the life another. Culture begins with the next encounter, and how one enters the next encounter reflects the heart he or she has for others. May we enter our encounters with love, seeking to always restore the *Thou* of the other.

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Appendix A

Guiding Interview Questions: Student Focus Group

Intro:

How long have you attended this school?

1. What do you like or appreciate about FMS?
 - a. What concerns you about FMS?
2. What does the word “restorative” mean to you?
 - a. Can you describe a situation you considered to be restorative?
 - b. What values do you see in the staff of FMS?
3. Describe the relationships you have with teachers at FMS.
 - a. Describe the types of conversations you have with teachers in your classroom
 - b. Describe the types of conversations you have with teachers in the hallways
4. Describe how teachers at FMS respond to conflict
 - a. How could the school’s response to conflict or misbehavior change?
 - b. How does the school address issues such as bullying, safe Internet use, discrimination, and prejudice?
 - c. Can you describe a time where you remember one of these issues being discussed?
5. Can you describe a leadership role that you take on at FMS?
6. Can you describe what makes a good learning environment for you?
 - a. Describe a story of a time a teacher supported you in learning

Appendix B

Interview Guide: Focus Group Interviews

Thank you for coming here today. I am excited that you have chosen to help me with this research. Again, the purpose of this study is to examine how members of the school community experience restorative practices and restorative culture in their school. The study aims to show that restorative practices impact school culture. Furthermore, the study is examining how restorative practices enable schools to uphold Progressive Discipline policy of the Ontario Ministry of Education. I believe that the voices of members of the school community can contribute to our understanding of the impact of restorative practices on a school culture.

Today's group interview will take approximately 90 minutes. I will take every possible precaution to ensure the integrity of you, students, school staff, and the school is upheld. As focus groups involve several participants, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. As the researcher, I am unable to control what is said outside of the focus group interview. In order to uphold the dignity and the confidentiality of each participant, I would ask that you do not repeat or discuss any portion of this interview. All names, including the school, will be kept confidential. Steps have been taken to ensure that all reporting of data will be anonymous throughout the entirety of this study. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Moreover, any data that is linked to a specific student or educator will be eliminated from the study. Nevertheless, due to the small number of participants, it is possible that someone could identify you in this study. A debriefing session will be conducted at the end of the interview to review the process and to address any questions or concerns you may have. The interview will be recorded with an audio recording device. Six weeks after the interview, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript, and to change or remove items you are not comfortable with.

In rare cases, it will not be possible to ensure confidentiality because of mandatory reporting laws (e.g., suspected child abuse) or the possibility of third party access to data (e.g., court subpoena of records). Furthermore, information you divulge that could lead to the harming of you the participant, or others, may be given over to appropriate authorities.

Remember that participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you withdraw, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. A decision to participate or not to participate will in no way affect standing in the school.

I thank you all again for being here today

Do you have any questions before we begin? (Ask each individual this question to provide each individual the opportunity to respond.)

Following the completion of each focus group interview:

At this time, I want to again request that you do not repeat or comment on anything that was said during our interview in order to protect the confidentiality of each of us, and to protect what was said during our time together.

To each participant:

Do you have any concerns about our process today?

Do you have any concerns about the focus group interview you have participated in today?

Appendix C

Participant Feedback

<Date>

Title of Study: *Studying Restorative Practices in an Ontario Middle School*

Principal Student Investigator: Owen Webb, PhD candidate, Department of Education, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Julian Kitchen, Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Brock University

Dear <name of participant>

Over the past six weeks, I have had the opportunity to transcribe our interview for my study on *Studying Restorative Practices in an Ontario Middle School*. Please find a paper copy of your transcript enclosed in this package. It is my goal to ensure that the interview reflects you and your opinions. You should remove any words or phrases with which you are uncomfortable. I also invite you to add information, if you feel it would clarify your thoughts and views from the interview.

Please be ensured that every effort will be made throughout this study to keep your information confidential. Furthermore, I wish to remind you that you may withdraw from this study at any time, if you feel that you no longer wish to be involved. A decision to withdraw will not impact you in any way, within this study, or outside of this study. If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca).

I will follow up in one week's time to collect your feedback. You may drop the feedback at the school office in the envelope provided. If you have any questions regarding your feedback, please contact me at ow04ov@brocku.ca. Upon completion of the study, you will be sent a summary of the final thesis. In addition, I will let you know how you can access the final report

Thank you for your continued commitment to this research

Sincerely

Owen Webb
Principal Student Investigator

Appendix D

Interview Guide: One-on-One Interviews

Thank you for coming today. I am excited that you have chosen to help me with this research. Again, the purpose of this study is to examine how members of the school community experience restorative practices and restorative culture in their school. The study aims to show that restorative practices impact school culture. Furthermore, the study is examining how restorative practices enable schools to uphold Progressive Discipline policy of the Ontario Ministry of Education. I believe that the voices of members of the school community can contribute to our understanding of the impact of restorative practices on a school culture.

Today's interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded with an audio recording device to ensure accuracy. In approximately 6 weeks, you will be given a typed transcript of our interview. At this time, you will be invited to confirm, clarify, and edit any points that you wish.

I will take every possible precaution to ensure the integrity of you, students, school staff, and the school is upheld. Every attempt will be made to protect your confidentiality. All names, including the school, will be kept confidential. Steps have been taken to ensure that all reporting of data will be anonymous throughout the entirety of this study. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Moreover, any data that is linked to a specific student or educator will be eliminated from the study. Nevertheless, due to the small number of participants, it is possible that someone could identify you in this study.

In rare cases, it will not be possible to ensure confidentiality because of mandatory reporting laws (e.g., suspected child abuse) or the possibility of third party access to data (e.g., court subpoena of records). Furthermore, information you divulge that could lead to the harming of you the participant, or others, may be given over to appropriate authorities.

Remember that participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you withdraw, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. A decision to participate or not to participate will in no way affect standing in the school.

I thank you again for being here today

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Appendix E

Guiding Interview Questions: Support Staff

Intro:

Tell me a little about yourself

What is your position at the school?

How long have you been involved in education?

1. What does the word “restorative” mean to you?
 - a. Describe the school vision for restorative practices
2. How have restorative practices impacted you as a staff member?
 - a. Can you describe a story of how restorative practices have impacted you?
 - b. How do you perceive your role in employing restorative practices?
 - c. Can you share a story about how restorative approaches changed how members of the school community experienced a situation?
3. How do restorative approaches impact students?
 - a. Can you give a specific example?
4. How have restorative practices impacted the culture at the school?
 - a. What unforeseen impact has restorative practices had on the school? On you?
5. How are restorative practices employed specifically amongst staff members?
6. Describe your experience of the implementation of restorative practices
 - a. What questions do you still have about restorative practices?

Appendix F

Guiding Interview Questions: Teachers

Intro:

Tell me a little about yourself

What is your position at the school?

How long have you been teaching/ involved in education?

1. What does the word “restorative” mean to you?
 - a. Describe the school vision for restorative practices
2. How do you perceive your role in employing restorative practices?
 - a. How have restorative practices impacted your teaching and pedagogy?
 - b. How have restorative practices impacted your responses to misbehavior?
Can you provide a specific example?
3. What impact does restorative practices have on students?
 - a. Do you have a story that describes this?
4. How have restorative practices impacted the culture at the school?
 - a. Can you share a story about how restorative approaches changed how members of the school community experienced a situation?
 - b. Have you experienced any surprising impact as a result of RP?
 - c. What unforeseen impact has restorative practices had on the school? On you?
5. Describe your experience of the implementation of restorative justice
 - a. What additional resources would be helpful for implementing restorative practices?
 - b. What do you believe should be the next step in terms of implementing restorative approaches at FMS?
 - c. What questions do you still have about restorative practices?
6. How are restorative practices employed amongst staff members?

Appendix G

Guiding Interview Questions: Administration/ Formal Leadership

Intro:

Tell me a little about yourself

What is your position at the school?

How long have you been involved in education?

1. What does the word “restorative” mean to you?
 - a. Describe the school vision for restorative practices
 - b. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of restorative practices at FMS?
2. What was the catalyst for implementing restorative approaches at FMS?
 - a. How do you perceive your role in implementing restorative practices?
 - b. How did/do you present the need for shifting to a restorative philosophy to your staff?
 - c. Can you describe a key dialogue you had with a staff member or your staff in regard to implementing and sustaining a restorative culture?
3. How have restorative practices impacted you as an administrator at FMS?
 - a. What impact does restorative practices have on students? Can you provide a specific example?
 - b. What impact does restorative practices have on parents? Can you provide a specific example?
 - c. What impact does restorative practices have on the community?
 - d. Can you share a story about how restorative approaches changed how members of the school community experienced a situation?
4. How have restorative practices impacted the culture at the school?
 - a. What challenges have you experienced in instituting a restorative culture?
 - b. Are there any changes you would make to the implementation process?
 - c. What unforeseen impact has RP had?
 - d. What additional resources would be helpful for implementing restorative practices?
 - e. How has the energy for restorative practices changed over time?
 - f. What do you believe should be the next step in terms of implementing restorative approaches at FMS?
5. How has policy been affected by restorative practices?
6. How are restorative practices employed amongst staff members?
7. What questions do you still have about restorative practices?

Appendix H

Sample Coding

Using the Atlas.ti, qualitative data analysis software the data were initially coded using selective coding. Upon completion of the selective coding, I analyzed the selective codes to develop 12 themes or supercodes. Using colours, each of the selective codes were linked to the 12 themes, establishing the foundation for the findings found in Chapter Four. The following is a sample of selective coding, with colours signifying the super codes.

When you say taking pressure off, what allows pressure to be taken off? What happens in a circle from your perspective to take pressure off?

Like, no one is isolated... so even if you aren't speaking, there's people to your left and your right... people are closed in. The questions are generally applicable to everyone. Instead of, "What's the answer to number 8?" *Shoot*. If you don't know it, that's a terrible situation. If you do know it... it's still all on you. Whereas a circle is like, "how was *our* weekend?" "How are *we* feeling about this?" "What are some ways *we* can come to this answer?" It's open... I think it creates that sense of... that sense of community, and that we are all in it together. If one kid is nervous about this, another kid might share that they are nervous about this. I feel like the dialogue isn't as internal. It's more open, and it's a real dialogue, right? Real things are present. I think that sometimes teachers are not always aware of the things students are thinking, encountering mentally, emotionally, physically, spiritually... I feel like once they do know, they might give us some answers. "*Oh, maybe that's why he is tired in the morning*"... "*Maybe that's why it's hard to get an assignment over the weekend*". I feel like students, some of the people they look up to the most, when they see those students might have some baggage, it might be so relieving to them, that they are not the only one. I feel like it's a community... the circle, the fact that there is no gaps, that it is connected... what that represents. People are engaged. People feel trusted. People feel supported. People feel like they can be more honest, be more open. They can see everybody!... and everybody can see them. And that's so important... that's so important. How many times have you walked by someone and pretended to look away, look at your phone. We live in a condo...an elevator condo... conversations can be pleasant or the most awkward sometimes. You do anything you can to not say hi to that person, whereas in a circle, everyone is there. I think it is so important, especially today, when everything is becoming more and more digitalized.

Like, no one is isolated... so even if you aren't speaking, there's people to your left and your right...

Circle

Dialogue

Dialogue

Dialogue is enhanced... not in it...

Restorative Questions

Like, no one is isolated... s...

Community Impact

It's open... I think it creates that sense of... that sense of community, and that we are...

Needs

I think that sometimes teachers are not alwa...

Relationships

I-Thou

Non-relational society

Addressing...

Trust

Engagement